

# Critical Appraisal of Sahaja Yoga as a Meditative Technique and its Potential Neuro Cognitive Effects

Ramlakhan Tiwari<sup>1</sup> & Prof. J.S. Tripathi<sup>2</sup>

1. Research Scholar, Department of Kayachikitsa Faculty of Ayurveda, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
2. Professor & Former Head, Department of Kayachikitsa Faculty of Ayurveda, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

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## Abstract

Sahaja generally means spontaneous. It also refers to something which is present since birth. Yoga means 'union' (with the all Pervading power). Sahaja yoga meditation helps us to achieve that union with all its Pervading spiritual power.

Sahaja yoga was started by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in 1970. Shri Mataji developed a unique technique to awaken the subtle spiritual energy (kundalini) which lies dormant at the level of sacrum bone situated at the base of our spine. The gentle awakening of this kundalini, which is also known as self – realization is the beginning of inner journey of self – discovery resulting in peaceful meditation leading to joyful life.

**Key words:** Kundalini, Subtle System, Nadi (channels).

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**Introduction** – Sahaja yoga describes the Natural and effortless manner in which the inner awakening occurs. Sahaja Yoga implies that every human being is born with the potential to be united with the Divine and that this potential can be passed on from person to person, and so to the entire world. This potential which can be actualised through Sahaja Yoga meditation relies on the spontaneous activation of untapped spiritual potential. Self- Realisation is the precise moment when the dormant Kundalini energy ascends through six subtle energy centres in the body piercing to the apex of the brain ( brahmarandhra) and connecting to all pervading primordial energy.

The Sanskrit word “saha” means with, “ja” means born and “yoga” means union. It means inborn union or God realisation. At the stage of God-realisation the water of life, referred to as “amrit” or nectar is felt as a shower of indescribable bliss, pouring down from the sahasarara into the central autonomous nervous system. When this happens the individual feels very relaxed and experiences a very peaceful meditative state known as “thoughtless awareness” or consciousness without thought. The Sanskrit term for thoughtless awareness is Nirvichara Samadhi.

**Sahaja Yoga – A Healing System** – The Bihar school of yoga, Munger, India describes yoga as a healing system that can be used to treat many ailments and disorders. All yoga systems are part of a broad spectrum of healing.

Sahaja yoga is a unique method of meditation based on an experience called “self-realisation” based on the process of Kundalini awakening that can occur within each human being. Sahaja yoga meditation was developed by shree Mataji Nirmala Devi in 1970. It involves the awakening of subtle spiritual energy known as kundalini which lies dormant at the level of sacrum bone at the base of the spine in three and half coils. The gentle awakening of this kundalini energy and the inner journey of self-discovery is known as enlightenment or self-realisation. According to the propagator of sahaja yoga Sri Mataji Nirmala Devi. “As soon as you are born as a human being, you have the right to unite with God. This is why human being are seeking. They are somehow aware of that right. This is a living evolutionary process. You don’t have to pay, you don’t have to plan, you don’t have to work hard. In your own right you will get it.”

### **The SUBTLE SYSTEM**

The Subtle system which was documented in India thousand of year ago, consists of seven energy centres called as CHAKRAS, three major energy channels called as NADIS and The Kundalini.

The Chakras correspond on the physical level to the plexuses of our central nervous system and the energy channels to the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system within the spinal column. Chakra means ‘wheel’ in Sanskrit. Because the chakra rotate clockwise like wheel, chakra have also a link with lotus flowers, each chakra having a different numbers of petals, which corresponds to the number of Sub-Plexuses in the physical plexus (nerve plexus), these Nerve plexuses control all of the energies at force within our body and secrete hormones and thus they are the root of all of our physical, mental and emotional activities. Thus, each chakra is associated with certain physical, mental and emotional traits. When we experience disorders at the mental, emotional or physical level it is due to a blockage or obstacle or tension in these chakras.

### **Concept about Kundalini:**

“Sasailavandhatrinam       yathadharohinayakah|  
Sarvesham   yogatantranam   tathadharo   hi  
kundalini||

### **- Hathapradeepika 3/1**

As the chief of the snakes is the support of the earth with all the mountains and forests on it ,similarly all the tantras (yoga practices) rest on the kundalini.

“Muladhare   Kundalini   Bhujagar   Rupni,   Tatra   Tishathathi   Jeevatma

kalkarkriti, Dhyaye Tejomaye Brahm-Tejo Dhyanam Paratparam.” –

### **(Gheranda Samihta)**

In the Muladhara, kundalini lies in the form of a coiled serpent. The innate self dwells there like the flame of lamp. Contemplation on this radiant light leads one to God realisation.

When the kundalini is awakened it rises through the spine and passes through our energy centres - CHAKRAS emerging through the Fontanelle area the part of the head which is soft in babies.

### **The Three Channels (Nadis)**

**Left Channel (Ida Nadi)** – Also known as tamo guna and the moon Channel, the left channel of the Central Nervous System governs our desires and emotions and culminates with the superego and conditioning. This channel can become blocked either by including in being over- emotional, easily sad and lethargic or by shutting off emotion entirely and being harsh with ourselves.

By clearing our left channel we can experience absolute emotion such as unconditional love, peace and joy. The channel also correspond to relationship with our past, negative emotions are often the result of subconsciously holding on to bad experiences with causes us to close our heart and react negatively rather than treat the present situation with an open, clean heart. Therefore someone described as more left sided, typically dwells on the past is overly sentimental and often feels easily down-hearted and unmotivated.

The left channel obstacles can be balanced by Sahaja yoga using cleaning techniques such as three candle treatment, rising early in the morning to meditate and greet the Sun, taking action without being overly active.

**Right Channel ( Pingala Nadi)** - Also known as rajo guna and sun channel the right channel of the central nervous system governs our thoughts and action. It culminates with our ego. It provides energy for our creativity, our rational mind, futuristic thought, our physical energy and dynamism.

The right channel also corresponds with our relationship to the future. Stress and overthinking, planning and worrying often occur as we anticipate what is yet to pass. Therefore someone who can be described as more right-sided usually has a very active mind and body, sometimes finding it hard to relax as their attention is on the future. They can be prone to ego, pride, anger, hatred, lust, and stress.

**Central Channel (Sushumna Nadi)** - Also known as sattva guna, this is the nadi of our evolution and equilibrium. It looks after our autonomous nervous system and corresponds to our spiritual ascent. When we wish for a more innate sense of contentment and purpose then the material or physical our attention move to the sushumna and our awareness evolves. The central channel leads ultimately to the

Sahastrara Chakra. Thus when our kundalini moves along our central channel, We are brought to a state of thoughtless awareness which is experienced with the Sahastrara Chakra opens. The key to achieving a true state of meditation bliss and enlightened awareness is to become a more centered personality, which swings neither to emotional, mental or physical extremes. This can be achieved by clearing our central channel and raising the kundalini repeatedly to strengthen and nourish it.

**THE SEVEN CHAKRAS** – There are seven major chakras within our subtle system known as Mooladhara, Swadhisthan, Manipur, Anahat, Vishudhi, Agnya and sahasarara each with different qualities. Through Sahaja yoga meditation and the simple technique we use to balance our subtle system, these chakras become the more balanced and integrated. Our awakened chakras bring us joy, peace, satisfaction and love.

CHAKRA	PLACE	NO. OF PETALS	ELEMENT	COLOR	BIJA MANTRA	GOVERNS	QUALITIES
Mooladhara	Pelvic plexus	4	Earth	Red	Lam	Excretion and Reproductive organs	Childlike innocence, gravity, dharma, spontaneity, purity, Wisdom and joy.
Swadhisthan	Aortic plexus	6	Water	Orange	Vam	Kidneys, liver, spleen, pancreas, intestines, uterus.	Pure creativity, pure attention, Pure desire, pure Knowledge.
Manipur	Solar plexus	10	Fire	Yellow	Ram	Stomach, intestines, liver, spleen.	Seeking, peace, gen
Anahata	Cardiac plexus	12	Air	Green	Yam	Heart, lungs, sternum bone	Joy, compassion, sense of security, love, responsibility, fearlessness, protection
Vishuddhi	Cervical plexus	16	Sky	Blue	Ham	Neck, arms, face, mouth and nose.	Self-respect, respect for others, good communication skill, diplomacy and detachment

Agnya	Optic chiasma	2	Light	White	OM	Pineal body, eyesight, memory and mind	Forgiveness, letting go, thoughtless awareness and inner silence.
Sahastrara	Limbic area of brain	1000+	-	All colors	OM	-	Union with divine Self-realisation,
							deep joy, thoughtless awareness, peace, integration and manifestation of all chakras.

**In this reference there is a famous quotation by sant Kabir das -**

“Do not go to the garden of flowers! O friend, go not there. In your body is the garden of flowers. Take your seat on the thousand petals of the lotus and there gaze on the infinite beauty.”

### **Benefits Of Sahaja Yoga**

- 1. Improved mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health** – Sahaja yoga makes a person calm and peaceful, helping lead to more meaningful life to cope up easily and effectively with the situation, strains and stresses of life.
- 2. Loving family and compassionate society** – The benefits of sahaja yoga accrue not only to the individual but also to society to the nation and ultimately to the entire humanity.
- 3. Unification of religion and spirituality** – Sahaja yoga integrates all major religions of the world. Sahaja yoga is practiced by people irrespective of one’s caste, creed, race, religion and nationality and worldwide.
- 4. Health benefits as a by product of kundalini awakening** – The seeker benefits through inner cure naturally as a by product of kundalini awakening while improving harmony and love in family and social relations.
- 5. Discovery of persona free from stress, tension and worries** - One becomes courageous confident, loving, peaceful and joyous and develops, artistic

talents. It is an entirely scientific experience with no scope for blind faith.

### **Techniques of Sahaja Yoga**

**Raising the kundalini** – Each meditation begins and ends with raising the kundalini and giving a bandhan. Raise the left hand from the base of the spine to the top of the head while rotating the right hand, clockwise around the left hand. The motion begins with the left hand in front of the right hand- palms facing your body. The right hand moves under in front of top of, and then again behind the left hand as your left hand moves upward all the way above your head.

**Giving A Bandhan** – A Bandhan protects our subtle system with a covering of divine vibration with the left hand towards the photograph take the right hand from the left hip, over the top of the head down to the right hip and then back again. Do this seven times to protect the seven chakras.

**Footsoaking** – Footsoaking is a very important part of sahaja yoga cleansing and Sri Mataji has recommended that anyone serious about progressing in their growth should footsoak every night, salt water is particularly good for the cleansing the swadhisthan and Manipur chakra.

#### **Method of Footsoaking**

Get a bowl( using only for footsoak), a plastic bowl will do fill it with enough water to cover the ankle, add a handful of salt and meditate with your feet in the water and hands palm upward. Keep a jug of water and a towel beside . After meditating rinse the feet with the fresh water from the jug and dry feet on the towel. Pour the water into the toilet and rinse the bowl with the fresh water. Those with heat in the right side and liver can footsoak with colder water, those who feel cold with warmer water. Experiment with what works best to silence the mind.

#### **Meditation with affirmation**

Sri Mataji used this technique to give self realisation in public meeting. These affirmations need not be said out loud but silently within. One can also use this technique to give his friends self realisation. Place the hand on the chakra of left side as shown and keep the left hand palm upwards towards Mataji, photograph. Repeat the affirmation the number of times specified. Keeping the eyes closed throughout the exercise.

For the last affirmation (sahasrara chakra) bend your head down to the chest a bit. Stretch the fingers on the right hand and place the palm on the forehead, push down and rotate the scalp seven times clockwise repeating the affirmation: please give me self-realisation or please strengthen my self-realisation.

**Method of meditation :** Sit comfortably in front of Sri Mataji photograph, with the left hand palm upwards on your lap, close the eyes and place the right hand on the

chakras on the left side of your body as shown, say the affirmation silently inside.

1. Put the right hand on the heart and ask the following question to yourself :“ **Sri Mataji, am I the Spirit ? (3 times)**”
2. Take the right hand to the upper part of the stomach under the ribs and press it in. ask the following question to yourself:  
“ **Shri Mataji, am I my own master ? ( 3 times)**”
3. Place the hand further down where the leg meet the body, and make the following request, ask this six times, as there are six petals on this swadhisthan chakra:  
“**Sri Mataji, please give me the pure knowledge.**”
4. Move the hand again up under the ribs and here assert “**Sri Mataji, I am my own master. (10 times)**”
5. Now, affirm the following while placing your hand back on the heart:  
“**Sri Mataji, I am the spirit (12 times)**”
6. With the right hand squeeze the left side of the neck and turn the head towards the right – say to yourself “**Sri Mataji, I am not guilty**” (16 times)
7. Place the hand across the forehead and squeeze the side it does not matter how many times but you have to say from the heart : “**Sri Mataji, I forgive everybody.**”
8. Put the right hand on the back of the head, lean the head backward and affirm without feeling guilty. “**Sri Mataji, if I have made any mistakes, please forgive me.**”
9. Stretch the fingers of the right hand and place the palm on top of the head on the fontanelle area, rotate the scalp over the skull in a clockwise direction seven times  
“**Sri Mataji, please give me my self-realisation**”

Place the right hand on the lap and sit in meditation for sometime, you can open the eyes and look at Sri Mataji’s photograph without thinking.

10. A cool breeze on the palms and on top of the head and a state of thoughtless peace indicate that the kundalini has risen. Try placing first the right hand and then the left a few inches above the top of the head and see if you can feel the breeze coming out. Initially, it is helpful to go through the whole process.  
“you just become, like a flower becomes fruit, its built in within you. Allow it to work out.” – Sri Mataji Nirmala Devi

## **Conclusion**

Sahaja yoga is a meditative technique that has been found to have beneficial effect in many psycho-somatic illnesses. By practicing of the sahaja yoga sadhana, the body attains subtle state of the spiritual consciousness. The practitioner who has attained Samadhi experiences see everything as consciousness. The aspirant realizes the oneness of the macrocosm and the

microcosm. In the response to practice of sahaja yoga the person develops Improved mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health, Loving family and compassionate society, Unification of religion and spirituality, Health benefits as a by product of kundalini awakening, Discovery of persona free from stress, tension and worries, As during the highest state the kundalini shakti reaches the sahasrara kamal (the thousand-petalled lotus) and has become united with shiva, the aspirant enjoys the highest stage. The sahaja yoga practitioner seeks to obtain liberation in and through the world. It is the path of enjoyment and liberation.

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