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# Kāyotsarga ► Meditation with Bodily Detachment

Posted: 12.05.2014

Updated on: 02.07.2015

## Introduction to Kayotsarga

Kāyotsarga is a special technique of Jain yoga. It is practiced many times in a day by monks.<sup>[1]</sup> It is also essential for the lay persons. The kāyotsarga, the fifth āvaśyaka for the Śvetāmbaras and for Digambaras the sixth, is part and parcel of Jain rituals. This ritual is called kāyotsarga i.e. meditation with bodily detachment. Hemachandra defines the kāyotsarga as standing silent in meditation without other movements except the involuntary movements of the body such as breathing for a definite time until the panca-namaskāra is recited.<sup>[2]</sup>

Numerous forms of the kāyotsarga characterized by slight differences of postures are noted in the monastic discipline. For the layman Hemachandra recognizes three main types, upright (ucchrita), seated (upaviṣṭa) and recumbent (śayita). Each of these again can be sub-divided into four categories, which for the upright position would be:

1. upright physically and upright spiritually,
2. upright physically but not spiritually,
3. upright spiritually but not physically,
4. upright neither spiritually nor physically.

These classifications denote the levels of concentration during the practice of kāyotsarga.

## The Meaning of Kayotsarga

The so called meaning of kāyotsarga Sūtra runs as follows<sup>[3]</sup>: Making an additional effort, practising penance, making purification, extracting evil from myself, I stand in the kāyotsarga in order to make an end to sinful acts. With the exception of inhaling and exhaling, coughing and sneezing, yawning and hiccupping, breaking wind, giddiness, and swooning, very slight movements of the limbs, the eyes and the saliva, and similar involuntary acts may, my kāyotsarga be unbroken and unimpaired; until I have completed the recitation of the namaskāra to the blessed arhats I shall cast aside my body in the standing position, in silence and in meditation. Thus kāyotsarga is a system of repentance through inhalation and exhalation on the basis of remembrance of stuti of twenty four tīrthaṅkaras.

## Significance of Kāyotsarga

### 1. Relevance of the Kāyotsarga for Prāyaścitta

There is a rule for the monks to practice kāyotsarga quite often after performing any ascetic duty like after coming from receiving alms, after pratilekhana (observation of religious things), after spiritual journey's walk etc. So whenever by doing any activity that upsets our physical function and agitates vocal-cord and mind, for resetting the functions, one undertakes kāyotsarga.<sup>[4]</sup> Āvśyaka Niryukti highlights the three postures for performing kāyotsarga i.e. lying down, sitting and standing, while Namdī Sūtra and Ācārāṅga Sūtra extends it to the left turning and right turning posture and so on. Whenever monks and nuns perform kāyotsarga, they do it with breathing in and out. Respiration is a mechanical tool for measuring the duration of kāyotsarga.<sup>[5]</sup> Kāyotsarga has a very significance in transgression atonement and purification of self. Different classifications of respiration is elaborately and clearly explained in Āvaśyaka Niryukti and in Niśītha Cūrni for different transgressions committed by monks and nuns, kāyotsarga of 8 respirations, of 100 respirations, of 500 respirations and of 1000 respiration etc. It is basically done for shedding off karmās which are bound during the day-to-day activities. Ācārya Amitgati<sup>[6]</sup> and Āśādhara,<sup>[7]</sup> prescribe a total of 28 kāyotsarga's as the atonement for six essential duties.

### 2. The Spiritual tool for Reducing Attachment

The first station of attachment is our body. People claim that they I have the most attachment with their wife, kids etc. but in a real sense man possess nearest attachment with their body. From the body, then it spreads towards the family members, then friends and then with the material objects. In the words of tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra, attachment is

the main cause of bondage,<sup>[8]</sup> whether it is towards one's body or others. The question is how to develop the consciousness of detachment? Kāyotsarga is a scientific technique through which detached attitude towards body can be developed.<sup>[9]</sup> Now the question is how to proceed for this goal. In kāyotsarga each and every limb of the body is relaxed through auto-suggestion. In a complete relaxed state, the ability to discriminate body and soul can be experienced. After the experience of bheda vigyāna (body and soul independence) detachment towards body takes place automatically. Then detachment towards nearest and dearest, then detachment towards the acquisition and enjoyment of material pleasure develops which changes the way of living completely. Attachment towards the self, kins and relatives and objects is the main cause of all social problems. Kāyotsarga is a single solution for mitigating problems arising through attachment and for developing detached attitude in every walk of life.

### **3.. Self-Realization and Kāyotsarga**

Kāyotsarga is considered as the first step to enter into the gateway of spiritual enhancement. There is a beginningless conflict between soul and passions, which obstructs in the path of self-realization. It is through the practice of kāyotsarga systematically and continuously, one can minimize ones passions and movements of body, mind and speech and experience the discrimination of body and soul i.e. attainment of right vision.<sup>[10]</sup> In that state one experiences the bliss of the perception of pure consciousness. In kāyotsarga conscious mind is completely withdrawn from external environment and seeks the separate being of the spiritual self. This is the state of enlightened world view, which leads towards enlightened knowledge and conduct, leading towards the path of liberation.<sup>[11]</sup> So kāyotsarga is considered as the first and final step for spiritual journey. Unless and until one learns how to practice kāyotsarga, the exercise of meditation and anuprekṣā does not prove so effective. The practice of kāyotsarga constitutes the ground work for the practice of meditation and anuprekṣā.<sup>[12]</sup>

In the first step of kāyotsarga, physical steadiness is attained. One experiences oneself free from tensions and feels refinement from the psycho somatic diseases. In the second step of kāyotsarga, some unique change occurs:

- Muscular system is regulated,
- Change in the wavelength of brain occurs,
- Intake of less oxygen,
- Involuntary muscular activities are controlled and the central nervous system becomes normal. Physical work efficiency develops. In the third stage, the gross body is less known but in subtle body, vibrations begin, even subtle objects are also perceived now and then. In the fourth stage, the soul acquires the self-realization due to the pacified state of passions.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **4. Physical Ailments and Kāyotsarga**

Today the human beings are seen to be ever restless for acquiring more and more money and material pleasures. Over-consumerism has completely changed the life style of man. In this fast era of consumerism, where nuclear families are increasing, so that responsibility of husband and wife has been increased. When ones body and mind is over strained, they become sick. The constant hypertension causes high blood pressure, heart attack and strokes etc. so people use anti-tensive pills, tranquilizers, which are not free from side effects. Sometimes they cause many other psychosomatic problems. Kāyotsarga or relaxation is an easy technique for removing hypertension, which is totally harmless and free from side effects.<sup>[14]</sup>

In heart related problems kāyotsarga technique is proved to be very effective. Dr. Manchanda has experimented on a group of persons and arrived at the conclusion that pulse rate, heart-beat, blockages in arteries decrease to a large extent through the practice of kāyotsarga. As per Ācārya Mahāprajña, rigidity of the muscles is the main cause of physical ailments. Another cause thereof is clotting in blood circulatory system. With the hardening of the arteries, the passages get contracted and this creates problems.<sup>[15]</sup> Kāyotsarga offers solution to all such problems by ending all rigidity, stiffness and hardening of the body. It is an exercise of body purification and self-awareness as essential for holistic development of personality.

In kāyotsarga, every tissue, each cell is prevented being over-loaded and the energy from being wasted, the metabolism slows down and need for oxygen is reduced drastically. It leads to positive effect on the nervous system, develops the capacity of immune system, lightness of body and leads to sound sleep.<sup>[16]</sup> Kāyotsarga is the best tranquilizer. The imbalance of vital energy is nothing but imbalance between sympathetic nervous system and para-sympathetic nervous system. S.N.S. creates hypertension and P.S.N. system helps in eradicating the tension. Kāyotsarga balances energy and minimizes problems, which are caused by hyper or hypo level of vital power.<sup>[17]</sup> In one sentence, we can highlight the essence of kāyotsarga, as said by Mahāvīra, that one can be free from all kinds of sufferings through relaxation.<sup>[18]</sup> It needs scientific explanation. Wherever brain acts on beta and theta levels, it agitates and gets disturbed easily and when it acts at the alpha wave level, it cools down and the secretion of serotonin leads to blissful state of mind, where there is no feeling of sufferings.<sup>[19]</sup> In kāyotsarga, if one practices vital energy flow throughout the body, the migraine headache problem can be eliminated.<sup>[20]</sup>

## **5. Eradication of Tension and Kāyotsarga**

Today, mankind, all around the world, has been confronted with more and more situations that produce stress. Scientific and technological development has generally improved the standard of living and created a lot of opportunities in all walks of life. Today's fast-paced lifestyle demands over-exertion at physical and mental levels leading to tremendous expense of personal energy, eventually overloading ones metabolism. It is now well known that when left hemisphere of brain remain unchecked, stress and tension eventually cause serious psychosomatic illness, such as stomach acidity and ulcer, chronic headache, depression, hypertension, stroke etc. and the list goes on.<sup>[21]</sup> Today, the medical researches declare that 90 to 95% of physical disorders are due to

stress and tension. Various methods are available for removing tension. Kāyotsarga or total relaxation is the most powerful technique to eradicate physical, mental and emotional tensions.

Tension takes the form of stiffness at the physical level, anxiety at the mental level and irrational fears at the emotional level. Under tension a person becomes easily irritable, gets upset or angry for no good reason, and feels hopeless, helpless, depressed and feels himself unable to cope with life anymore and may even turn to commit suicide. Therefore the solution lies in learning how to cope with stress on a daily basis. The Bhagvad Gītā rightly suggests, even as burning fuel is accompanied by smoke, every activity is accompanied by some blemish. Ācārya Mahāprajña says, we have to find out how to reduce the activities of the body, mind, speech and feeling. For every one hour of engagement let there be a ten minute disengagement i.e. relaxation.<sup>[22]</sup>

One must voluntarily activate his/her parasympathetic autonomous nervous system at the end of each day to drain off the stress and tension accumulated during the day. Kāyotsarga is a practice of systematic progressive relaxation in Jain Prekṣā Meditation technique. In this technique the practitioner activates, via autosuggestions, his/her parasympathetic response to stress. Anybody, who, after learning the technique, practices systematic relaxation every day for 30 to 45 minutes, would not only remain relaxed and unperturbed in any situation, but also greatly enhance the efficiency and quality of his life, by pacifying ones emotions.<sup>[23]</sup> Thus kāyotsarga is a very good remedy for mental tensions and the moment one calls anyone 'mine', suffering starts. The true meaning of kāyotsarga is dissolution of the sense of owning and science of differentiation. The spiritual philosophy of treating body and soul as different entities automatically puts an end to tension by destroying its very source as per the view of Mahāprajña.<sup>[24]</sup> Kāyotsarga is a powerful spiritual formula and permanent remedy for avoiding tension altogether in this era of stress oriented lifestyle.

## **6. Conservation of Energy and Kāyotsarga**

Kāyotsarga is an important activity in ascetic life. Frequent kāyotsarga is recommended for an ascetic after completion of any physical, mental and vocal activity.<sup>[25]</sup> Mahāvīra seems to be a great scientist as he prescribed this injection of frequent kāyotsarga for the monk's life. Today's research declares that frequent relaxation can stop the wastage of nervous energy in muscular action, in speech and in thought. In total relaxation, every tissue, each cell is prevented from being over loaded and the energy from being wasted. Energy saved from being wasted can be accumulated, stored and utilized to reach higher standards of meditation. In relaxation, metabolism slows down, the respiration rate slows down and the need for oxygen is reduced drastically.<sup>[26]</sup>

## **7. Auspicious Ritual and Kāyotsarga**

In canonical texts, Kāyotsarga is considered an auspicious ritual through which we can overcome inauspicious karmās. While commencing any sort of good work, the practice of kāyotsarga is essential. In Āvaśyaka Niryukti, while going for any auspicious work, if you meet with bad omen, eight śvāsocchavāsa (inhaling and exhaling is one) of kāyotsarga to be performed. If again harmful omen occurs, again practice of sixteen śvāsocchavāsa of kāyotsarga to be carried on. In a religious life, familial and social life often auspicious occasions appear now and then, for successful completion of good work, kāyotsarga can be practiced.

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#### Footnotes:

- [1] Daśvaikālika Cūlikā.2.6, p. 105. abhikkamaṇaṃ kāusaggakārī.
- [2] Yoga Sāstra of Hemachandra.iii.130.
- [3] Ibid, pp. 607-611.
- [4] Daśvaikālika.10.13.vosattha cattadehe.
- [5] Ibid.verse 1544.
- [6] Śrāvakācāra of Amitgati.VIII, 66-67.
- [7] Sāgāra Dharmāmṛta of Āśādhara.VI.27.
- [8] Mahāprajña.Mysteries of Mind, p. 15.
- [9] Mahāprajña. Why Meditate, p. 121.
- [10]Mahāprajña. Mysteries of Mind, p. 15.
- [11]Tattvārtha Sūtra of Umāsvāti, 1.1.
- [12]Mahāprajña.The Mirror of the Self, p. 75.
- [0] Mahāprajña.The Mirror of the Self, p. 72.
- [16]Muni Dharmesh.Preksā Sandarśikā, p. 13.
- [17]Mahāprajña. Lord Mahāvīra's Scripture of Health, p. 134.
- [18]Ibid, p. 132.
- [19]Kāyotsarga Śatākā of Bhadrabāhu, p. 10.
- [20]Sādhanā, Prayoga aur Pareṇāma, p. 5.
- [21]Arun & Mayuri Zaveri.Therapeutic Thinking, p. 51.
- [22]Mahāprajña. New Man: New world, p. 81.
- [23]Mahāprajña. Why Meditation, p. 76.
- [24]Mahāprajña. New Man: New World, p. 86.
- [25]Daśvaikālika Sūtra. Vivittacariyā, 2.7.
- [26]Mahāprajña. Preksā Dhyāna: Kāyotsarga, p. 21.
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