

# **International Yoga Teachers Training Course**

International Center For Yoga Education and Research

## **FINAL THESIS**

# *RISHICULTURE ASHTANGA (GITANANDA) YOGA*

**A COMPLETE SYSTEM OF YOGA**

**In The Service Of Yoga  
By The Grace of My Guru**

**With Respect And Obeisance For The Paramparai Of  
Yogashiromani Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri**

**Submitted In Partial Fulfillment For The Course Requirements  
Of The 35th Annual International Yoga Teacher Training Certification**

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**By**

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**“Salutations To My Self, Who Is Infinite.  
Salutations To You, The Auspicious Being.  
Salutations To God of Gods, To The Supreme Self.”**

**- Sage Valmiki -Yoga Vasishtha 5:4:78**

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## I. Introduction:

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Yoga is arguably more misunderstood today than at any time in history. While the Yoga of the past was shrouded in mystery it was understood to be a mystical path to God realization reserved only for the sincere and privileged few. Aspirants were rare beyond numbers and oftentimes had to prove their worthiness by undergoing extreme austerities. Today in Kali Yuga aspirants have reduced themselves to become mere participants following hungry “Gurus” who promise quick fixes for better buns, flat tummies, and magic sex. The meaning of sincerity has become twisted into how much money one can pay, while “authentic” teachings are marketed for the masses who believe themselves to be among the privileged few. Yoga classes in our modern, civilized world have been diluted and stripped of sacred ritual in an effort to make more palpable to those who are not interested in God realization.

As one will see through this study of one of the few remaining authentic paramparai (lineages) Yoga is a science that becomes a divine art when its elements feed unto each other. Upon understanding this mystic flow from our own unconsciousness to consciousness we see how the process (divine art) was really consciousness to unconsciousness then returning again to consciousness. Yoga practices never exist for or by themselves, so as one moves higher and higher they see more similarities in practices than differences...such is the profound nature of the microcosm of Yogic practices into the macrocosm of Yogic experience. A complete system of Yoga promises union so that the Yogi too ceases to exist for or by themselves, all one as opposed to alone.

Contrary to popular belief Yoga is not a system of exercise. While the various Schools of Yoga incorporate systems of exercise they are not about the exercises. Yes, the exercises (practices) play a vital part in the pursuit of Yoga but they are not the goal. Many people look to Yoga as a means to sleep better, loose weight or as a cure to any number of ailments, while these goals are practical and are among the many benefits/side effects of Yoga our individual/universal needs will be better served if we study within the framework of an authentic and complete system of Yoga. If we choose to study from a system of Yoga that is about the exercises we will never realize Yoga’s true benefits. Most of today’s “Yoga” (exercise) schools are very disconnected from the true meaning of Yoga. The teachers have developed their own hybrid form of yoga, which demonstrates a lack of understanding from the original lineages fundamentals. There exists a psychic power behind original teachings that these hybrid schools are lacking in. This being said there is nothing to fear as the true teachings and practices along with their subtle meanings cannot be understood by the insincere student. Gitananda Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga is a complete and authentic Yoga path with an unbroken lineage of Gurus and Yogacharyas (Guides) that date back nearly 7000 years to the original Sapta (seven) Rishis.

## II. Paramparai:

*“A Guru Kula is a place where “learning is by Absorption”  
rather than by “Superimposition” of mundane knowledge.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

A Paramparai is a succession of spiritual masters and their teachings. The essence of Parampara is to surrender to the chain of predecessors. To those who follow in the footsteps of the Parampara everything comes of its own by the grace of the Guru (God). Parampara then is not just the lineage it is also the power of the teachings of that lineage.

There are very few authentic Yoga lineages still remaining in existence today. Some 7000 years ago the original Sapta Rishis (seers) delved beyond the human mind and merged with the Divine to discover the true nature of reality. One of the original Seven (Sapta) Rishis “Brighu Rishi” was a great exponent of the science of Yoga as a means to attaining God Realization. The Paramparai of Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri and Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga as espoused by Swamiji comes directly from Brighu Rishi. As a child Swamiji was well schooled in the principles, knowledge, and disciplines of the mystic sciences of Yantra, Tantra, and Yoga. Raised in the traditional Indian Guru Kula system where the Chela (student) lives with the Guru and receives the teachings of the paramparai he was nurtured by his Master Swami Kakananda Brighu Maharaj. At the age of 54 Swamiji became the Mahant (Spiritual successor and Head) of the Paramparai initiating students and transferring the timeless teachings of the Brighu Rishi lineage. The Gitananda Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga that is taught today is a very unique and special paramparai as it carries the full power of two authentic lineages, the North Indian Bengali Tantric lineage as handed down from Brighu Rishi, and the South Indian Saiva lineage as handed down from Sage Agastya Rishi.

### North Indian Brighu Tantric lineage

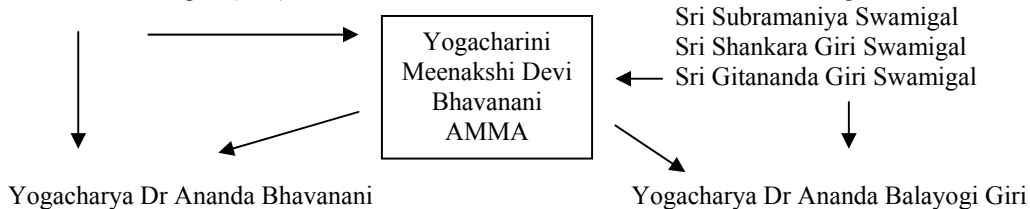
BHIGU RISHI PARAMPARAI

Sri Brighu Rishi  
Sri Purnananda Brighu  
Sri Vivevishananda Brighu  
Sri Kakananda Brighu  
Sri Gitananda Brighu (Giri)

### South Indian Saiva Siddhanta lineage

AGASTHYA RISHI PARAMPARAI

Sri Kambaliswamigal  
Sri Ambalavana Swamigal  
Sri Manikka Swamigal  
Sri Shanmuga Swamigal  
Sri Velu Swamigal  
Sri Subramaniya Swamigal  
Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal  
Sri Gitananda Giri Swamigal



### III. Dakshina Marga Tantra:

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Rishiculture Yoga is of the Dakshina Marga Tantric system of Yoga and all of its practices are based on its core fundamental principles of sublimating energy. Dakshina refers to the right hand path of Tantra and is therefore not interested in the occult practices of the Vama Marga Tantrics. Tantra refers to the cultivation and control of energy and the use of all the forces within the 5 bodies of man as well as the forces of nature. Dakshina Marga Tantrics use these energies for evolutionary purposes while the Vama Marga Tantrics use these energies for degenerative purposes of power control. While both systems deal with the cultivation and control of energy The Dakshina Marga System and its Guru's concern themselves with the Karma, Dharma, and overall best interests of the Chela.

### IV. Philosophical Aspects:

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To attempt to elucidate with words on the infini-faceted interconnected nature of Yoga is and always has been the greatest feat never to be accomplished. The highest goal and the greatest feat for any human to achieve is to have realized ones "Self". This achievement although impossible for man alone, is possible with the help of the Divine. Within the Brighu Yoga tradition many great Saints have realized this goal and can attest to the authenticity of the path. There are many techniques and practices offered within the Rishiculture system and all are presented within a solid philosophical framework. While there are many concepts that are important the following nine concepts are "Core" to the Teachings of Swamiji.

#### 1. Inner Guru

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*"My Salutations To My "Self"  
Who is one with all existence,  
Who is bereft of change,  
The object of which is innermost consciousness".*

- Sage Valmiki - Yoga Vasishta 5:4:70

The most key fundamental and important core teachings of Swamiji is to bring the Sadhak in tune with their inner Guru. Any genuine Guru will focus on the "Self" (Inner Guru) realization of the Chela. There are many Gurus who are dependant upon the Chela for "power" this is a sure sign of an unrealized Guru. It is only through constant questioning, deep introspection and stilling of the mind and its desires and aversions can we truly "know" ourselves. This "Knowing" is the what Swamiji is all about, he did not advocate a style of teaching that asked the Chela to simply believe he pushed his students to go further.

*“Believe Nothing. Know Everything.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Every student who studied with Swamiji describes being able to do things that were beyond them, things they could not possibly have done while maintaining their puny individual identities. Swamiji was a “no option” Guru as was his Guru before him and the string of Gurus before him. Bringing oneself in tune with the Inner Guru or our true Guru is the primary focus of Rishiculture Yoga, all else is to attain that end.

*“Health and happiness are your birthright. Claim them.*

*Spiritual realization is your goal. Pursue it!”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

## **2. Skill in Action -** →

Many so called “spiritual” people are societal dropouts who are simply trying to escape the world. Swamiji taught us that a spiritual person is not the one who escapes to the Himalayas to die in a cave but rather he gave us the tools to live a spiritual life in the world and be in service to others. As you will find out in the upcoming sections everything is inter-related, the Bhagavad Gita expounds the importance of living skillfully and is directly related to living our Dharma... Let Go, Let God.

## **3. Lift the Self by the Self** →

No one will save us and the sooner we take responsibility for our lives and our actions and reactions the faster we will climb the evolutionary ladder. Swamiji often stated that we need to lift the self by the self. We have to pick our selves up by our own bootstraps so to speak and put one foot in front of the other always moving forward.

## **4. Awareness and Consciousness** →

*“Yoga Is A Scientific System Of Conscious Evolution.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga could be called the Yoga of awareness for every single practice is to be performed with awareness ever single time it is done. This is possibly the single most profound concept within the whole system. This awareness must also be taken into our lives to have moment-to-moment present minded consciousness with every thing we are doing in any given moment.

## **5. Polarity** →

Among the most key elements to The Rishiculture system is the concept of polarity in fact all aspects are pervaded with awareness of polarity and re-balancing the bodies energies. Optimum physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual balance requires that we be balanced. Most people today are completely out of balance in fact it has reached epidemic proportions in every culture. Yoga cannot be achieved without nurturing and maintaining polarity. Through the Kriyas, Pranayamas, Asanas, Mudras and Mantras we can maximize the balanced flow of the bodies energy systems.

## **6. Concentration / Relaxation** →

There exists in the universe a fundamental law that cannot be escaped and that is of involution and evolution, expansion and contraction, creation and destruction, the universe moves in cycles. We too need to attune our selves to these cycles if we are to attain the highest levels of truth, Satchidananda. Within every class there is a natural process of concentration and contraction to relaxation and expansion. This philosophy allows us to move into our lives in a more balanced and harmonious way.

## **7. Karma And Dharma** →

*“Dharma is the highest expression of cosmic truth; it is to know the reason for personal existence and to unfold consciously through experience back to the cosmic state”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Swamiji taught that we must do the right thing at the right time in the right way for this is the way of Dharma. If we are to live a life of purpose we must pursue our Dharma and only through fulfilling our Dharma can we attain spiritual liberation. All the practices and teachings are limited in power and the power derived is directly proportional to the level of Karmic and Dharmic evolution that we have attained and adhered to. The way we live, the work we do and how we do it is vital to the teachings of Swamiji. In this day and age of spiritual fantasy and escapism many people have become societal dropouts and in reality spiritual failures. Swamiji stated “the physical purpose of man is work, and the highest form of work is Nishkama Karma or selfless service” sometimes referred to as Seva. Spirituality is in reality very practical and requires that we live fully, contributing to society and fulfilling our Swadharma.

## **8. Way Of Life** →

*“Yoga Is A Way Of Life.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Yoga is a way of life, it cannot be practiced for one hour in the morning 3 times a week for Yoga is an experience of life that requires our full participation. Swamiji recommended a “Wholistic” approach to yoga that pervaded ones whole lifestyle. The following recommendations were taught to help unify the life experience.

1. Right Mental Attitude.
2. Right Morals and Right Ethics
3. Right Diet
4. Right Exercise
5. Right breathing
6. Inner and Outer cleanliness
7. Serenity
8. Maturity and Growth Goals
9. Attainment of a Spiritual Ideal

## **9. Service** →

The most practical of Swamijis teachings is to take our spirituality into life through our work and attitude to others. To do our work with an attitude of service or Seva (Selfless Service) is one of the most yogically advanced and spiritual practices anyone can do.

## **V. A Complete System of Yoga:** →

Gitananda Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga is described as being a “complete System of Yoga” due to it integrating all aspects of Yoga. The following 9 systems are covered as the “Core” systems that we Adhere to.

### **1. Hatha Yoga:** →

*YOGASH CHITTA VRITTI NIRODHAH*

*“Yoga is the cessation of the whirlpools of the mind.”*

Sage Maharishi Patanjali - Yoga Sutras 1:2

Many people equate Hatha Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga as a physical system of exercise; upon a deeper understanding we can see that it is so much more. Hatha Yoga refers to the balancing of energies, Ha meaning Sun and Tha meaning Moon, Hatha the bringing together of both energies. Simply put Yoga is the stilling of the whirlpools of the mind as stated by Maharishi Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. The techniques and practices are tools to achieve that end. Swamiji taught the Ashtanga

Yoga of Patanjali as a no option Yoga meaning that all aspects must be followed to attain Yoga.

*“We cannot solve our problems. But the practice of Yoga techniques will help us “dis-solve” the problems. We never “correct” our flaws, rather we “outgrow” them.”*  
- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Ashtanga Yoga is a vital part of the Rishiculture system and is inculcated at every level. Included below are the various limbs of Ashtanga Yoga and their branches.

### I)Yamas

*“Virtue is its own reward”.*

Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

- 1) Ahimsa
- 2) Satya
- 3) Asteya
- 4) Brahmacharya
- 5) Aparigraha

### ii) Niyamas

*“Yama and Niyama is simply enlarging the space between stimulus and response”*

- Yogacharini Yogamani Smt. Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani

- 1) Saucha
- 2) Santosha
- 3) Tapas
- 4) Swadyaya
- 5) Ishwara Pranidhana

### iii) Asana

*“There can be no Yoga when the mind wanders, when there is no awareness or consciousness. The most perfect Asana becomes nothing more than a gymnastic, if the consciousness and awareness are not fully present in the bodies postures.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Gitananda Rishiculture Yoga utilizes Asanas in a very concise and practical manner, there are;

1. 108 Total Groups

2. 9 Core Groups

- ii) Sama Stithi
- iii) Hathenas
- iv) Loma Viloma
- v) Pada Asanas
- vi) Digestive
- vii) Oli Group
- viii) Shirsha
- ix) Twists

x) Pelvic Openers

3. 9 Foundational Asanas

- a. Padmasana
- b. Sarvangasana
- c. Shirshasana
- d. Bhujangasana
- e. Shalabhasana
- f. Dhanurasana
- g. Halasana
- h. Paschittmottanasana
- i. Navasana

4. 18 Basic Asanas

- a. Vajrasana
- b. Dharmikasana
- c. Padmasana
- d. Sarvangasana
- e. Supta Vajrasana
- f. Siddhasana
- g. Shirshasana
- h. Bhujangasana
- i. Shalabhasana
- j. Dhanurasana
- k. Matsyasana
- l. Trikonasana
- m. Halasana
- n. Paschittmottanasana
- o. Matsendrasana
- p. Shavasana
- q. Navasana
- r. Chakrasana

5. 9 Foundational Asanas

- a. Padmasana
- b. Sarvangasana
- c. Shirshasana
- d. Bhujangasana
- e. Shalabhasana
- f. Dhanurasana
- g. Halasana
- h. Paschittmottanasana
- i. Navasana

6. 384 Total Asanas

#### iv) Pranayama

*“Pranayama (breath control) is the key to life – that is, a Yogic life.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

In the Rishiculture system of Yoga, Pranayama is taken to mean, “control of Prana”. Swamiji taught that in the beginning, rough stages of practice, it involves learning to move the breath according to “space, duration or time, and enumeration” By “space” Swamiji taught using all the various spaces within the lungs, as well as the outer and inner space. By “Time”, he meant the different ratios and numbers used to guide and measure the inhalation, exhalation, and the held in and held out. By “Number” Swamiji taught us the effectiveness of various Garshanas, or rounds. Swamiji facilitated the awareness and control of the complete breathing apparatus through a set of practices known as The “Hathenas” which form the “A and B and C” of all Rishiculture Pranayama and in essence are “Vital” and inseparable to the complete system of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga.

*“watch the breath until you become the breath”*

Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

#### 1) 3 Classifications Of Pranayama

Within the framework of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga there are three distinct classifications of Pranayamas.

1. *The Adhamas* are those, which are used for cleansing and purification of the physical body, the nerves, organs and also as a means to build health, skill endurance and other necessary qualities in Sadhana. They are the basic foundation for all Pranayama practice as taught in the Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga System.
2. *The Madhyamas* are those, which were aids in meditation and concentration, that is, those that were directly beneficial to mind control. They are further used as an introspective means to gain sensory withdrawal.
3. *The Uttanas* are those used in Kundalini arousal and Shakti awareness and control. The actual Practices taught that are used to arouse Kundalini are not revealed in a casual manner and are reserved only for the most pure, dedicated and serious seeker.

Pranayama is generally divided into *Prana Yama*, the restraint, or Yama of breathe on a held in or held out breath and *Prana Ayama*, the conscious control over the entire breathing mechanism and the distribution of Prana throughout the various physical, emotional, mental, and psychical systems of the being.

#### 2) 12 Sub-Divisions

Our Rishis further sub-divided Prana into 12 divisions;

2 – Para Pranas

5 – Major Pranas

5 – Minor Pranas

Each of these sub-divisions of Prana relate to all aspects of our life and control over these leads to mastery over our lives.

#### 3) 120 Pranayamas

Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga is considered one of the most advanced if not the most advanced Paramparai in the world for its study and practice of Pranayama.

#### v) Pratyahara

The Yogi does not believe that the senses must be dulled, but rather, sharpened so as to be the best of all senses, and then brought under control of that part of the mind, which properly maintains that control. In this paramparai we believe that it is not necessary as kill the senses or slay the mind, rather it is necessary to bring them under our control.

#### vi) Dharana

*“If there are any distractions, either outer or inner,  
then concentration cannot be undertaken”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

There are many types of concentration practices and exercises and in fact the Gitananda system of Yoga is a highly internalized school where all of the practices can be performed as an act of Dharana. In the higher Raja Yoga concentration is of a particular type called Adhyatmika Dharana or Atman Dharana where concentration is on the indwelling Self. Specific forms of Adhyatmika Dharana are on the Chakra centers of the higher and lower bodies, Mandala Dharana, Bija Dharana that is also a form of Mantra Dharana. External objects of concentration such as Trataka or the various drishti Dharanas are very beneficial but not to be confused with the Raja Yoga Dharanas. Indeed one could easily say that every Yogic practice and technique requires an element of Dharana.

#### vii) Dhyana

Dhyana is in today's world of confused spiritual seekers a very mis-understood concept. The state of meditation is the actual union with the divine where there ceases to exist any separation. Many people state that they are meditating which is in actuality an impossibility for in meditation there is no one left to say I am meditating. Dhyana is the state that is closely linked to Samadhi and occurs from many years of Sadhana and a unique combination of Karmic circumstances.

#### viii) Samadhi

*“ ...When the mind burns like a lamp in a windless place”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Samadhi or cosmic consciousness is the highest state of consciousness that man can attain to. It is as though mind has been transcended and mental state of the usual type no longer exist. Samadhi is that “Self” same state of ecstatic Union that Yoga strives for and transcends all of existence. In the Yoga Sutras Maharishi Patanjali two stages of Samadhi the first being Sabija (with Seed) Samadhi and the second as Nirbija (Seedless).

## **2. Jnana Yoga:** →

*Right Knowledge is based on:*

- 1. Direct Cognition*
- 2. Inference*
- 3. Testimony from Authority*

Sage Patanjali - Yoga Sutras 1:7

By definition Jnana Yoga is the Yoga of knowledge or more precisely wisdom. In Jnana Yoga we use the power of the mind to transcend the mind. Jnana Yoga is ideally suited for people with strong intellects and who seek reasons for what happens. In Jnana Yoga we wish to know the secrets of the universe with our minds. To quote Kahlil Gibran the famous Lebanese poet we seek to know in words our hearts desire". Jnana Yogis seek God with the faculty of the mind. Within the Rishiculture Yoga tradition we use the mind to study the scriptures and to gain correct knowledge from valid sources such as the Rishis, and of course Swamiji. With the knowledge we gain we use the mind to transcend the mind.

## **3. Gita Yoga** →

*Thy concern is with Action alone, never with results.  
Let not the fruit of action be thy motive,  
nor let thy attachment be for inaction.*

Krishna - Bhagavad Gita 2:47

*"Each chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is a Yoga, teaching some particular aspect of divine play in the world of Maya or phenomenal existence. Krishna (the Superconscious Mind) tells Arjuna that the message he brings to him is one of imperishable Yoga, the way to unified existence that has been taught from the earliest times. The teachings exalt Dharma, doing ones duty and fulfilling obligations through Karma or right actions. The Gita teaches that this is the Panacea for moral and ethical decay. Living the teachings of the Gita overcomes unrighteousness and evil in our nature by re-establishing righteousness or right-use-ness".*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

*"That which can not be followed in day to day living should not rightly be called religion. Life is to be practical, simple, uncluttered, efficient, rewarding and enlightening. Anything in ones life that tends to confuse, distort or derange, should be shunned as ones mental and mortal enemy. These are the real teachings of the Gita."*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

*“The Gita is a medical textbook on a very high level, where in eighteen chapters each one containing a specific Yoga, the eighteen human senses are dealt with. “*

*- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri*

Below are listed the 18 chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, each chapter is a Yoga unto itself and are taught as a vital inseparable component of Rishiculture Yoga.

1. The Yoga of the despondency of Arjuna
2. The Yoga Of Knowledge
3. The Yoga of Action
4. The Yoga of division of wisdom
5. The Yoga of Renunciation of action
6. The Yoga of Meditation
7. The Yoga of Wisdom and realization
8. The Yoga of the imperishable Brahman
9. The Yoga of the Kingly science and the Kingly secret
10. The Yoga of divine Glories
11. The Yoga of the vision of the divine form
12. The Yoga of devotion
13. The Yoga of the distinction between the field and the knower of the field
14. The Yoga of the three Gunas
15. The Yoga of the supreme spirit
16. The Yoga of the division between the divine and the demonical
17. The Yoga of the division of the three fold faith
18. The Yoga of liberation by renunciation

*Do not depend on anything outside of your own self. Yoga is the original science of self help. Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita says “by the self is the Self realized”.*

*If you lean on someone else, and he moves, then you will certainly fall.*

*Always balance yourself on your own two feet.*

*- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri*

#### **4. Karma Yoga – Bhakti Yoga:**

*“When in doubt.....ACT.....don’t think. If you are right, you will succeed.*

*If you are wrong you will soon discover it, and the consequences of the action will burn out the karma of your error”.*

*- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri*

The Bhakti Marga or path is for the Yogi who is filled with emotional sentiments, this is the path of devotional surrender. Ultimately Karma Yoga is that which removes the Ahamkara or ego.

*“On account of devotion, (that is) through a particular love, (Bhakti) (towards him), the lord inclines (toward the Yogin) and favours him alone by reason of his dispassion only, the Yogin draws near to the attainment of ecstasy (Samadhi) and the fruit of ecstasy, (which is) liberation”*

## 5. Kriya Yoga →

Kriya Yoga is for the spiritual aspirant who seeks to discipline and gain control of the body, emotions and mind. Many people believe Kriya Yoga to be a shortcut to Kundalini arousal Swamiji stated, “There are no shortcuts to Spirituality, the evolutionary journey is a long one”. Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras states Kriya Yoga to be the last three Niyamas, specifically Swadyaya (self study), Tapas (Austerities), and Ishvara Pranidhana (devotion to a personal deity). Ishvara Pranidhana is of particular interest as without it we are little more than demons searching for power. Swamiji preferred to term Ishvara Pranidhana as Atman Prasadatum, as there exists a two way street that relates rewards as being directly proportional to effort and purity. Sage Patanjali stated that Kriya Yoga will in itself , produce Samadhi, Cosmic consciousness, and the state of enlightenment. Kriya Yoga is taking the last three Niyamas to their highest level.

## 6. MudraYoga: →

*“Verily the Mudra is the Devi, even the Supreme Adept Himself...  
Devi is Shakti, but the Mudra controls Her...  
So Mudra is also the Supreme Shakti*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

In studying the various Mudras presented by many Yoga teachers today it seems at first glance that this ancient and “secret” science has been discovered and opened to all. Upon further investigation and a deeper study of these esoteric “gestures” we discover that the hidden aspects of Mudras are still quite safe from the uninitiated and insincere. The absolute best description of Mudras comes from Swamiji's Book entitled “Mudras”; the following excerpt gives us a clearer understanding of this sublime science.

*“The traditional meaning ascribed to the Sanskrit term “Mudra” is as a seal, a gesture or a secret practice of Yogins. The Kularnava describes Mudra as coming from “Mud”, meaning “delight, or pleasure” and “Dravay” the causal form of “Dru”, to draw forth. In Hinduism, Nyasa is also included in the science of Mudra. Ancient authorities agree that the Mudra has four distinct aspects or powers. First the Mudra gives delight to the deity being worshipped or evoked. Secondly, it draws the compassion of the evoked deity. Thirdly, “melting the mind of the deity” the worshiper gains control over that force; and lastly, for the mystic, the Mudra gives control over the powerful forces of the deity manifesting through psyche, mind, and body”. “One ancient Tantric work states that “Mudra” is the mystical symbol for the*

*number or numeral “18”. In Yantra, Hindu mystic symbology and semasiology, it is stated that Mudra is the secret meaning behind the art of writing and reading.”*

The higher practice of Mudras gives the Yogin a powerful “key” into the sublime. After having developed a level of proficiency in the Bahiranga practices of Hatha Yoga as a sincere Sadhak and successfully living a “Yogic lifestyle” Rishiculture Students are initiated into appropriate Mudras according to their proficiency. So as we can see Mudras are much more than “additional” practices that can help us, they are in actuality a Yoganga or independent and complete branch of Yoga.

*“In Yantra, Mudra Yoga is a classical school of practice, where hands, feet, body, emotions and mind are all used in actual or symbolical gestures. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika also states the Mudra to be a Yoganga, while the Shiva Samhita classifies ten Mudras, and the Gheranda Samhita describes twenty five.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Within the practices of Tantra and Yantra, we will find that there are 729 classical Mudras, this is not surprising since Tantra and Yantra are the Yogas of energy sublimation par excellence.

## **7. Mantra Yoga:**

Mantra Yoga is one of the most powerful forms of Yoga. It originates before time and can transport us to the timeless state of reality. Mantras are articulate sounds, which unite the sub-consciousness, consciousness, and super-consciousness. The ancient Rishis discovered the nature of reality and the Divine through the persistent use of Mantra. Not only is the Universe constantly reverberating its sacred Mantra we can attune to it by repeating it. The most powerful Mantras that are taught within this Paramparai include the practices of;

1. Japa Mantra
2. Ajapa Mantra
3. Pranava AUM
4. The Gayatri Mantras
5. Mantra Laya
6. Nada (Cosmic Listening)

Chanting the name of the Divine has been advocated by all of the great Rishis and sages as a direct path to Self Realization.

## **8. Yantra Yoga:** →

*“India has revealed to the world three Sacred Sciences: Yoga, Tantra, and Yantra. Yoga is the Practical Path to oneness with life, Tantra is the mystical control of power and energy, while Yantra is the science of Being hidden behind form.”*

- Ram Gopal Mujumdar (Swami Kanakananda)

Yantra Yoga is a Yoga where the understanding of basic geometrical forms produces an appreciation of what is called “spiritual mathematics”. A complete system of yoga involves all aspects of the esoteric practices of Yoga, Tantra, Yantra, Mantra, and Mudra. Rishiculture Yoga is a classical example how all the classical teachings feed into each other. As you may have already noticed as we study the teachings of this Paramparai there exists a mystical formulation where the teachings manifest into series of 3's, 6's, or 9's. All numbers of practices can be reduced to these common numbers. For example 384 Asanas when added together equal 6 ( $3+8+4 = 15 / 1+5=6$ ). It is upon further study of the mystical and esoteric meanings of these numbers that we begin to see the universe and all its manifestations in complete harmony.

*“Ordo Ab Chao” – “There Is Order In Chaos”*

*-Is an ancient axiom appropriate to the universe as well  
as the study leading to a knowledge of this same universe”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Very little can be said to the uninitiated about the higher teachings of Yantra as without a firm grounding in the Ashtanga Yoga system the true meaning will be lost. Much emphasis is placed by the Yogacharyas of this Paramparai to teach people where they are at and be responsible to both the student and the teachings. It makes no sense to teach a baby to run or jump when it can barely crawl. Like this the appropriate teachings are passed on at the appropriate time to the appropriate students.

*“Mudra and Yantra are concerned with Self Realization through development of the intuitive, psychic faculties of man in the most positive manner, allowing self control and mastery.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

As you can see there exists a framework within all of the teachings that feed unto each other. Within the framework of Yantra there are again 9 specific schools of Yoga that are espoused for various individuals from a Yantric viewpoint of Dharma.

1. Hatha Yoga
2. Jnana Yoga
3. Pranayama
4. Karma Yoga
5. Raja Yoga
6. Yantra Yoga
7. Mantra Yoga
8. Laya Yoga
9. Bhakti Yoga

### 9. Raja - Laya Yoga:

*Hatha Yoga is a ladder for ascending to the heights of Raja Yoga*  
Yogi Swatmarama Suri – Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

Laya means to re-absorb and as a Yoga means to re-absorb all the energies and forces normally dissipated in daily living. Tejas and Ojas (higher forces) are produced through these practices and the highest of all emotional-mental ecstasies are created by these techniques. Laya Yoga is open to the most advanced Students in the world, this Yoga deals with the psychic forces including Kundalini Shakti, its arousal and control with Agni Yoga, Atma Yoga, and Shakti Yoga. This Paramparai identifies 12 Chakras, 6 lower, and 6 higher. The 6 lower Chakras are associated with the 6 major Nerve plexuses of the Body.

THE 6 NERVE PLEXUSES AND THEIR CORRESPONDING CHAKRAS	
<u>Nerve Plexus</u>	<u>Chakra</u>
1. The Sacral Plexus	Mooladhara Chakra
2. The Hypogastric Plexus	Swadhisthana Chakra
3. The Solar Plexus	Manipura Chakra
4. The Cardiac Plexus	Anahata Chakra
5. The Pharyngeal Plexus	Vishuddha Chakra
6. The Cavernous Plexus	Ajna Chakra

The 6 higher Chakras are associated with our higher Self, with the 6 lower Chakras are merely a material reflection of the 6 higher Chakras. Advanced studies of Raja Yoga include the study of the various 108 Siddhis and Riddhis. As taught by Swamiji there exists 3 types of Siddhis (psychic accomplishments) and are of 12 origins while Riddhis

is a state of Psychic prosperity. Raja Yoga is the highest stages of Ashtanga Hatha Yoga where the practices are dealt with at the subtlest levels of energy.

## **VI Yoga Chikitsa:**

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By fully embracing a complete system that incorporates many Yogic practices we can in actuality heal the root of our dis-eases. Swamiji was the world's foremost authority on Psychic Neurology and its correlation to Yoga Chikitsa. Swamiji discusses nine factors or the Nau Dhushyas in the practice of this Paramparai's Yoga Chikitsa that are of a physical nature and an additional 3 Non-physical factors to make up the twelve systems of the body or Dwadasha Kramas.

**STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS IN YOGA**  
**THE NAU DHUSHYAS – NINE FACTORS**  
**DWADASHA KRAMAS – TWELVE SYSTEMS**

**PHYSICAL:**

- |               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Ashti      | Bone tissue                      |
| 2. Mamsa      | Muscle tissue                    |
| 3. Nadis      | Nerves                           |
| 4. Rasa-Rakta | Circulation and blood components |
| 5. Indriyas   | Organs                           |
| 6. Granthis   | Glands (9)                       |
| 7. Medo       | Adipose tissue                   |
| 8. Majja      | Bone Marrow                      |
| 9. Soma       | Hormones (3- Ojas, Tejas, Sukra) |

**NON-PHYSICAL:**

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1. Prana  | Emotions (3- Prana Nadis, Prana Granthis, Prana Bindus) |
| 2. Manas  | Mind (6- Chitta, Manas, Buddhi, Bindu, Loka, Mandala)   |
| 3. Chakra | Psyche-Ahamkara (3- Chakras, Atman, Paramataman)        |

Yoga Chikitsa as taught in this Paramparai does not let the patient become a passive participant but rather actively involves the Patient/student to empower themselves and truly heal the real issues surrounding their dis-ease. Without actively healing thyself one will Karmically re-create the dis-ease this is why Yoga Chikitsa cannot and should not be disconnected from a regular Sadhana and a Yogic lifestyle which includes following the Yamas and Niyamas as well as a balanced vegetarian diet. Yoga Chikitsa is dealt with through all the bodies of man and the nine dimensional world in which he lives.

The Yogi Lives in a nine –dimensional world represented by:

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. First Dimension   | Line                 |
| 2. Second Dimension  | Surface or Plane     |
| 3. Third Dimension   | Depth                |
| 4. Fourth Dimension  | Space                |
| 5. Fifth Dimension   | Time                 |
| 6. Sixth Dimension   | Mind                 |
| 7. Seventh Dimension | Astral Memory        |
| 8. Eighth Dimension  | Intellect            |
| 9. Ninth Dimension   | Spiritual Liberation |

### **TRI-UPADHIS**

#### **The Three Bodies of Distinguishing Characteristics**

- 1. Karana Upadhi** – The Causal body, containing the Anandamayakosha.
- 2. Sukshma Upadhi** – The Subtle body containing the Vijnanamayakosha, Manomayakosha, and Pranamayakosha.
- 3. Sthula Upadhi** – The Gross or dense body, containing the Annamayakosha

## **IX. Kaya Kalpa:**

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*“Yoga is the mother of all sciences  
Yoga is the mother of all religions”*

- Maharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Kaya Kalpa is India’s ancient science of rejuvenation and involves cleansing and break down followed by build up and regeneration. If the anabolic process of metabolism is accentuated to a greater degree than the catabolic destructive processes of metabolism then we remain young, youthful and energetic. Aging has little to do with chronological passing of time. Many teenagers today have the bodies of 80-year-old senile degenerates, having mis-used their bodies so early in life. Kaya Kalpa is a process that requires that the patient/student retreat to an ashram or health center to live in a nutritive environment with a restricted and disciplined lifestyle including Diet, exercise, and cleansing followed by building practices. The cleansing practices include;

1. Fasting
2. Shanka Prakshalana
3. Eka Dasi

The fasting process varies from person to person and is followed by the Shanka Prakshalana techniques unique to this Paramparai. Eka Dasi is an 11-day physical, mental and psychic cleansing practice that breaks down traumas and cleanses them at a

cellular level. After the breaking down phase the build up phase consists primarily of the 45 day Pancha Sahita Pranayama. Kaya Kalpa is extremely powerful and is often thrown around haphazardly in today's discussions of health and healing, make no mistake Kaya Kalpa is a life changing process.

## **X. Summary:**

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*“I am everywhere” and “I am nothing”  
This kind of vision embraces the real existence,  
...there is no other way of realization.*

Yoga Vasishtha 5:6:67

In Summary we see that there are many systems of Yoga with many names and various practices that leave aspirants confused as to which path to follow. In the Rishiculture System as espoused by Swamiji we use many practices to maximize the benefits of Yoga and help us on our path. Many schools will say that one path is for one type of person while another path is for another type of person this type of generality cannot be applied to the multifaceted nature of any human being. 100 years ago Yoga was Yoga, today there are hundreds if not thousands of yoga schools with names that leave seekers confused as to the meaning of certain Sanskrit names. For example Ashtanga in the western world has come to mean a type of power yoga that is a dynamic exercise, indeed some people don't even know that Yoga is more than exercise. Swamiji Named this system of Yoga after the ancient Rishis or original seers who the origins of Yoga can be traced back to. Many ignorant people have become Yoga fundamentalists and they don't even know how the ancient Rishis lived. Living in a balanced way in harmony with the universe was the foundation for Yogic Life. The Rishis lived in the world, they raised families and contributed to society; The Rishi way of life or culture was the real teachings of Yoga and is the essence of Rishiculture Yoga. Ashtanga is simply the foundational limbs of Sage Patanjali as set out in his Yoga Sutras; Rishi Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga system which is far more than a system of exercise is a core part of the Rishiculture system.

*“Everything is there for your use. Nothing is there for your misuse.”*

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

After Swamiji achieved Samadhi on December 29<sup>th</sup> 1993, the Worldwide community began calling the Rishiculture system as Rishiculture Ashtanga (Gitananda) Yoga. Hundreds of thousand Sadhaks worldwide have benefited from the immense body of Knowledge that Swamiji passed to us especially for his practical message to live life fully and consciously in the same evolutionary way that the Rishis expounded to us nearly 7000 years ago. Today, in Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, South India at the International Center for Education and Research in Ananda Ashram, The Rishiculture Ashtanga (Gitananda) Yoga system as taught by Swamiji is continuing, as it has been, for 35 years producing a maximum of a dozen highly qualified Yogacharyas (guides) per year to propagate the true meaning of a productive Yogic life by living by example.

*“Therefore, Rama, let the enlightened person engage in worldly tasks,  
ignore whatever gets lost and accept whatever that comes his way.”*

- Yoga Vasishtha 4:4:102

## References.

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“There is only one secret in this universe and that is .....There Is No Secret!”

- Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

**The Author claims no original thought in the compilation of this material other than the inspiration to codify it within the inseparable Yantric framework that it exists in. The majority of the text used in this thesis is directly or indirectly quoted or paraphrased from the various books and printed material distributed by Ananda Ashram and the International Center for Yoga Education And Research (ICYER) the international head quarters of Gitananda Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga. Introductory statements and clarification have been given to allow concepts to flow in a thesis format. This thesis was written with the intent to establish a framework that accurately describes the teachings as delivered by Swami Gitananda Giri Guru maharaj to the uninitiated and to inspire a further more complete codification in a full book format.**

OM SAHANA VAVATHU  
SAHA NAU BHUNAKTHU  
SAHA VIRYAMKARAVAVAHAI  
TEJASVI NAVADHITAM ASTHU  
MA VIDVISHAVAHAI  
OM SHANTHI, SHANTHI, SHANTHI OM

May we both be protected together. May we both be nourished together. May we both work together with great energy. May our study be fruitful and enlightening. May we not quarrel, nor hate each other. Om peace, peace, and peace, Om...

*THE END*