

# **A TIBETAN HEALING CULTURE IN HUNGARY: PRANANADI**

By Zsuzsanna Monika  
Feher

Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology*

Supervisors:  
Daniel Monterescu & Vlad Naumescu

*Budapest, Hungary*

2011

*“Medicus curat, natura sanat”*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks for my supervisors Daniel Monterescu & Vlad Naumescu and the leader of the Prananadi organization in Hungary; as well as to all the Prananadi practitioners I came across with, and to everyone who played a part in helping me to be able to write this paper.

## ABSTRACT

This MA research paper seeks to analyze the adoption of a Tibetan healing method known as Prananadi in Hungary. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with Prananadi practitioners, auto-ethnography and literature analyses. My argument is that Prananadi has its own special traits which singles it out and makes it a very different healing technique from what Westerners are perhaps used to, even exotic, especially in contemporary Hungary. Hungarian circumstances have also made it possible for Prananadi to grow into an increasingly popular healing culture and community. All the way through my thesis I will be searching for information that can help map these hypotheses. Therefore, as possible information base for later research, I map Prananadi in a way that I emphasize its traits, which make Prananadi different from other non-conventional healing techniques; and highlight three analytical units, which also mirror the unique characters of Prananadi. These three analytic units are: 1. Organizational structure & dynamics, 2. Bodily practices, and 3. Knowledge production. The first analytical unit includes organizational structure, hierarchy, and also the characteristics of the internal relations between the people within the Prananadi community: practitioners, teachers and their assistants. Their relations to the people outside of the organization will be examined: their patients, and other people working within medicine; as well as its dynamic aspects, which include the global diffusion of ideas from the East. The second basic category is the bodily practices, also known as embodiment, which includes elements of phenomenology. The knowledge production constitutive element addresses the question of how knowledge is produced and spread within the organization; there are

also other related aspects, like the migration of knowledge from Tibet to Hungary and its relation to secrecy, training and authority. The resulting healing culture draws on a hermeneutic practice of medicine predicated on secret knowledge, and there are no other healing techniques or culture, which has similar combinations of these three elements.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 1. METHODOLOGY .....	8
1.1. Methods used in the project .....	8
1.2. Subjects of the project .....	8
1.3. Methodological difficulties.....	10
1.4. Related Literature .....	11
CHAPTER 2. INFORMATION ON PRANANADI & THE 3 ANALYTICAL UNITS .....	15
2.1. Information on Prananadi .....	15
2.1.1. The history of Prananadi .....	17
2.1.2. Phenomenology.....	19
2.1.3. Embodiment.....	20
3.1.4. Symbolic anthropology .....	22
2.2. Organizational structure .....	23
2.2.1. Within the Prananadi organization.....	23
2.2.2. The Prananadi organization and its relation to the outside world .....	27
2.3. Bodily Practices .....	29
2.3.1. Healing & Body .....	32
2.3.2. Reincarnation traveling .....	34
2.4. Knowledge production .....	39
2.4.1. Migration of knowledge .....	40
2.4.2. Knowledge production within the Prananadi organization.....	41
CHAPTER 3. INTERACTION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, BODILY PRACTICES, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION & OTHER COMPONENTS .....	45
3.1. <i>Interaction of the organizational structure, bodily practices and knowledge production</i> .....	45
3.1.1. Related literature .....	45
3.1.2. Interaction of the three analytical units.....	47
3.2. Other relevant aspects effective on Prananadi practices.....	51

3.2.1.	Secrecy .....	51
3.2.2.	Financial aspects .....	54
3.2.3.	Symbols and Rituals .....	56
3.2.4.	Other components .....	57
CHAPTER 4.	CONCLUSION .....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	.....	61
WEBPAGES:	.....	63

## INTRODUCTION

*My first Prananadi <sup>1</sup> course was in the beginning of 2008. I heard about the course by a friend, who was already on level 3 and we shared a same type of private and health problems. I was very skeptical, so it took me a year to start my Prananadi studies. After I got the contact from my friend I called the Pn teacher, who was very kind and said the nearest available course date for this 2 days course and its location (a village just on the outskirts of Budapest), what to take (very comfortable set of clothes, my toiletries, an exercise book and a pen, and food), how to get there and also the cost of the 2 days course (around 11 thousands Forint). We could choose to stay there for the night or go home after the first day around 6pm when we finished and go there again early in the morning.*

*When I got there, on an early Saturday morning, the Pn teacher was waiting for me at the entrance of her house and she welcomed me into her home. She was a well-built, short, black shoulder length haired woman in her late thirties, wearing tracksuit bottom, with a very warm welcoming attitude. (Later on it turned out that she was a singer at the Hungarian State Radio, and she feels professional calling to stop her singing career and only deal with Prananadi in her future.) She invited me into her house, and said that we would not spend very much time in the garden, and that I should not worry about her dog (a large light brown dog with mixed origin) and told me that dogs behave in a way we do and according to what attitude we teach them. For example, if you are nervous and you hate people, your dog will behave the same way, but if you are relaxed and you love people the dogs will do the same. Inside I was ordered to take my shoes off and put down my bags by the door, and my food into the fridge. We waited for another 5 people, and then started the course at 9 am.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Pn.=Prananadi



*She had a 3 bedroom 1 floor house with a middle size garden. The house had a long thin hall with the entrance door, the fridge and shoe racks on one end and the kitchen on its other end, a bathroom, an initiation-room (where we were only allowed to go once, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day at the initiation), and a tiny living room, which lead us into the course room. The furniture was just like in any other house, except in the course room, which only had shelves in, with Prananadi related objects like photos, books and a hi-fi, cd-s, a sofa, many blankets and pillows for the students. Its floor was covered as tiles by red textile covered thin mattresses. The decoration of this small room was full of Buddhist symbols, e.g. pray flags on the ceiling, pictures of Buddha, flags of Buddhist says, and pictures of symbols of Buddhism on the walls.*

*My fellow students were a girl in her 20's, who was a singer-dancer and kindergarten teacher, she also studied massage; a middle aged couple, -it turned out that the woman brought the man with her as showing him alternative way of dealing with life issues; a man in her late 20's who was interested in alternative therapies, as he had some illnesses previously, and was successfully treated by a Prananadi healer, and an another middle aged woman, who had similar problem and motivation. They were all wearing comfortable clothes, and seemingly enjoyed the course. We were told, that all of us incidentally ended up being in the group and that incidents don't just happen, we were probably in the same group as we had something to teach / learn to/from each other.*

*We were told about some course rules (e.g. the teacher says when we start and finish a session, meanwhile we were only allowed to go out for going to the toilette or have cup of tea, which was prepared for us in the kitchen), introduced ourselves, then started Pn education. First we had to hold each other's hands and had a 20' meditation of us going away to a nice clean field and basically concentrating on cleaning us from negative emotions then we went back to, where we started. All of us, 6 students had to write down what the teacher read up from the Prananadi centralized teachers' course book, as Prananadi book for student does not exist,*

however we did get a Prananadi-book of leaflets with basic information on Prananadi and chakras etc. When we asked something, which was part of higher level Prananadi education, the teachers smiled and said that she cannot talk about it. The atmosphere of the course was very pleasant by the use of meditations, music, and the glimpse into the Asian way of seeing the world as well as the Buddhist philosophies. We were however told that Prananadi is not related to the religious part of Buddhism, and Prananadi is basically a unique entity with a history of being kept by Tibetan monks for centuries, therefore it is inevitable that it has some connection to Buddhism.

In the lunch break, we were able to talk about anything. Then the course continued. By the end of the day, we have studied mainly the basics of the Prananadi studies, e.g.: its history, the layout of the chakras and the main nadis (energy tracks) within the human body, meditation. We also learned to use the rod, which is a healing accessory, an 10cm x 20 cm L shaped metal rod, from which one could ask whether a certain healing treatment can be done on a patient (by specially holding it with a thumb and middle finger and put the longer end of the rod to the 2nd chakra and as an answer the rod waves either, the previously established, yes or no side) , and also helps to see the possible low energy location within the patient body (by waving into a direction away from the middle neutral position, while the healer touches the patient's aura with one hand and holds the rod in the other. At the end of the day the entire group chose to go home, except me. After talking to the teacher about common, non-Pn related issues, while we had dinner, I stayed for the night in the course-room, where I read a book about Buddhist philosophies in the evening, while the teacher slept in the initiation-room. (She converted her bedroom into the initiation-room, as by then she could not yet afford a bigger house, where these could be separate rooms.)

The second day was also writing down some further information, Pn meditation and practicing the positions on each other and on ourselves when we heal by the hand. The day was finished by the initiation, which happened in the initiation-room, where

*the teacher previously for about 15' prepared herself for the initiation, with some rituals, which is unknown for people under initiation-master level, and changing into her initiation clothes, also by decorating the room with some flags/pictures of Prananadi philosophy, also by lighting up some candles and insects. We went into the room in couples, after we heard the bell as a sign for the next group of students to enter, first, as we were previously was asked, we had to put our hands together when palms touch each other in front of our heart chakra, and had to bend slightly, then we were asked to sit down on a previously prepared chairs for us in the middle of the room, then to close our eyes. The teacher, in couple of steps, did something around one student, then the same on the other student. The whole ceremony did not take longer than 15'. When it finished we were told to open our eyes, get up from our chairs and after getting a ritual Prananadi hug with the teacher, (when our heart chakras meet while giving hugs with left hand up on the other person's back via the her shoulder, and with the other hand touching her back from downwards via her waits), walk backwards towards the door while bending slightly with Prananadi welcoming/thank you position (with palms together front of the heart chakra). When everyone finished with the initiation, we were all asked to share our impressions of the 2days, and were given further advices to be on a detox from caffeine, meat, alcohol for 21 days and have a self-treatment daily for also 3 weeks. (Self-treatment is going along the 45 positions /e.g.: neck, shoulders/ on the body with touching by both hands, for 2' for each position). Then we paid the fees and left for home.*

*After the first course I felt like I had just came back from something similar to a "Buddhist weekend". All I then did for two days was socializing with new people and concentrating on my body. It was very different from my previous studies and from the usual university context of learning. At the same time, as I am hard-wired with scientific thinking I could not help but wonder whether this course was just a trick? With the help of my previous psychological studies I collected various aspects of the course which could perhaps point to signs of manipulation, for example common only positive actions at the courses (e.g.: holding each other's hands in meditation and going somewhere nice while leaving bad things behind, having a nice*

*atmosphere); also making it a kind of privilege to be able to learn more information, (as we constantly had to face that the teacher was not able to talk about anything, which was related to further studies); and by 'getting into' the course already felt like 'we are the lucky one, who made it'; or to keep most of the studies in secret (e.g.: when we had to pull the curtains in when we were learning about symbols, as they were secrets, and not only other humans but animals were not allowed to see them either). All of which, made us feel that we were doing something very different related to everything else we had learned so far, and possibly the group cohesion, stronger.*

*When 2 years had elapsed I decided to change my Prananadi teacher, and repeated the level 1 course. I had by then worked out that teachers, although they teach fundamentally the same things, have slightly different styles and methods. My new teacher was more relaxed than the others about the rules which could also be the reason why he was very popular among Prananadi students<sup>2, 34</sup>*

There are many stories like the one under which show gaps within classical medical frames and makes people open up to non-conventional healing techniques. Up until now there have been no studies conducted into Prananadi practices.

*A young girl in her twenties did not feel very well so she went to a doctor who consequently sent her for an MRI scan. It turned out that she had 'sclerosis multiplex'. There is no known cure for this illness.*

---

<sup>2</sup> He had taught with the same sentences and acts but included jokes within his routine, also without, secret routines like, ever pulling the curtains closed the atmosphere in the course room was even more relaxed.

<sup>3</sup> The student count was between 30 and 70 for every course with the exception of the high level courses which naturally commanded a smaller intake.

<sup>4</sup> Here I have noted my experiences which finally lead me into leaving Prananadi practices:

Above master level we were asked to complete along with the theoretical work, further experimental studies. We were asked to perform a "bending down" exercise – which was to last for 40 minutes. This consisted, as it looked like for me, a 4-steps-push-up motion such that you might find in an aerobics exercise. This should be performed at least once a day for 3 weeks along with self-treatment (another 45 minutes). If these were not completed we could not continue with the experimental studies, only the theoretical, which in fact would be detrimental and devoid of the point in studying Prananadi. However, my skepticism suddenly kicked in with a little harshness and as a result I am taking a rest from my Prananadi studies, but I am very eager in finding out further information related to energy and the human body.

*Her doctors subsequently told her they can only slow the process of the illness but cannot cure it. She then came across a Prananadi practitioner who treated her for a year and a half. When she returned to the doctors there was no sign of her illness. Her doctor was very impressed but confused, and said “According to official medicine, it is impossible.” This happened years ago. The young girl became a healthy woman who now is a healthy mother with two healthy children.*

The aim of this MA project is to analyze the adoption of Prananadi, a Tibetan healing method and culture as it is currently active in contemporary Hungary. The MA project is based on ethnographic fieldwork with participant observation and interviews with Prananadi practitioners.

My argument is that three analytical units of knowledge production, bodily practices and organizational dynamics of Prananadi have a special combination which makes Prananadi in many aspects a unique healing technique in contemporary Hungary. The result is a ~~dynamic healing~~ culture predicated on a hermeneutic practice of healing by symbols which involves secrecy and revolves around the notion of life energy.

This paper is organized as follows: Following the methodology in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2. I describe information on Prananadi and highlight three analytic units: Organizational Structure & Dynamics, Bodily Practices, and lastly, Knowledge Production. The first part, within Chapter 2. is the ‘Information on Prananadi’, where I gather as many information as possible on this healing technique, including its history and related literature; which is followed by the ‘Organizational structure’ unit is about the hierarchy and characteristics of the internal relationships between the people

within the Prananadi Practitioners organization as well as their relationships to the people outside of the organization i.e. their patients, and other people working within medicine. This also includes its dynamic aspects, the global diffusion of ideas from the East, and the changes I have seen in the last two and a half years. The third part within the second chapter has at its core the bearing on bodily practices and touches elements of embodiment, bodily memory and the absence of mediation in Prananadi practices. The final, forth part of chapter 2 is about knowledge production and the constitutive element and is where I talk about how knowledge is gained and spread within the organization. Here I ~~also~~ talk about related aspects of the practice such as the migration of knowledge from Tibet to Hungary.

Chapter 3 is about the dynamics of the relationships of all of the three elements. I will describe how they interact with one another and show that I found this interaction creates an affirmative reverberation circle. I will then talk about the possible hidden forces, which maintain this unique dynamic between the analytical units.

Throughout the paper I will highlight aspects which support this hypothesis by showing features of the Prananadi organization; contradictory evidence will also be discussed. Finally, in the conclusion of my paper I will summarize why I think the hypothesis is supported by showing the relationships of the above mentioned three constitutive elements supporting them with relevant information.

## **CHAPTER 1.      METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1.    Methods used in the project**

The methodology used in this research project was as a participant in observation using an ethnographic fieldwork approach among Pranadi practitioners covering two and a half years. I used discourse analyses for background as well as accurate up to date information. My participation in Pranadi courses, practices and get-togethers lead me to socialize within the practitioners' circle which on occasion gave rise to unstructured interviews which were used in order to map out bodily practices, organizational dynamics and the interviewee's personal view on the organizational dynamics as well as other relevant information. Also, at some places I added some auto ethnographical quotes from my notes of fieldwork.

### **1.2.    Subjects of the project**

Discourse analysis was made on the Pranadi book of which there is only one. It was written by the Hungarian leader of the Pranadi organization. It used to be public until a couple of years ago when the leader thought that people used it unethically as it appeared to contain secrets. The number of people belonging to the organization is constantly rising and only a small proportion actually has this book. I was lucky enough to get hold of a copy of the online version. The book is 84 pages long and contains many chapters among those on treatments, Pranadi tools, courses, healing techniques and information on the Pranadi philosophy.

Discourse analysis was carried out on related academic literatures as well. I analyzed medical and sociological anthropology, as well as sociology literatures among others, related to occultism, phenomenology, indigenous knowledge, subjectivity, secrecy, global Buddhism. I could only use parts of these literatures in this paper and found occultism and Buddhism irrelevant; therefore I totally left those out.

I have changed masters, partly because my first teacher did not like me asking questions about Prananadi. Where more information was needed to the content of this paper I added some of my auto-ethnographical experiences. The subjects I used for the interviews were Prananadi practitioners. In the first round I talked to about 25 people. Most of them had a very interesting personal story why they ended up doing Prananadi, also a conformist attitude towards the Prananadi organization, which I will discuss later on. When I asked questions of them it was discovered that the most frequent answers were “I don’t know ask X.Y. or the master” and “Oh, I did not think about it before, I don’t know’. Then very closely, I talked to seven people, and I ended up using quotations from interviewees who are very determined in their studying of Prananadi up until the furthest level possible. One of them was a medical student in her late 20’s, another was a young man in his early 30’s who works in an office as well as being a singer. The girl met Prananadi while she was supporting her belated boyfriend of 7 years who was diagnosed with cancer and learnt that classical medicine was “not enough”. She firmly believes that classical medical education should be more open towards alternative healing techniques. His motivation for doing Prananadi was curiosity. He had some



previously negative experiences with the traditional Hungarian education, despite always getting 'A' grades, and thinks that within the Prananadi organization it is worth studying. I use pseudonyms in order to protect their identity.

### 1.3. Methodological difficulties

Firstly it is important to note, that I have personally only completed a quarter of the levels which can be reached here in Hungary therefore there is much information in relation to Prananadi practices which I am unable to know about. Additionally, because of the secret aspects of Prananadi practices, it was difficult to talk to people and getting information out of them. However those, which are unrelated to this study I believe I am well informed in relation to the subject of this paper.

Secondly the Prananadi practice has some aspects of which are difficult to reach so in this respect it is a closed system. For example, it is very difficult to know about the written resources of the origin of this type of healing. When someone does not see or understand something they (masters and practitioners) might say that he has not matured enough to see those things, which are the reasons why he cannot see it, and when the right time comes for it, he will be able to understand.

From a Western point of view it is impossible to catch some aspects of Prananadi it is hard enough to understand and internalize their value system, let alone criticize it. It seems to be in a different dimension of knowledge. I talk about these aspects in more details in a later chapter.

And last but not least, my position within the Prananadi system might have an effect on what I could see as an anthropologist, also my level of knowledge could determine what I could experience, and other epistemological matters are that just by asking questions, I could have an effect on the interviewees' experiences.

#### 1.4. Related Literature

In the introduction of her book *The Naked Science*, Nader highlights the tension coming from the differences in public discourse worldwide, which portrays science as autonomous, self-generated, unique, absolutely superior and progressive, while others see that knowledge, as being rapidly overshadowed, replaced, and pushed aside by the introduction of science and that technology assumes primacy. She says that "the traditional way of seeing science in Western societies and the so called 'cosmopolitan science' is called to be transformed in order to meet the newly seen needs of contemporary science. 'Science' with a capital S and the consequences of its global expansion based on power rather than greater rationality." Also, that the credibility of science and its cultural authority is still achieved though attempts to exclude values from the space of science. The recognition of lost knowledge is made all more real by failed development projects; Nader says: "...we need not idealized non-Western science to make the point that there are different types of knowledge that provide valid truths of use to human kind" (Nader, 1996, p.24). In relation to Prananadi practices, it is enough to be said that it is a several

thousand year old Tibetan healing technique.<sup>5</sup>

Boundaries of what is expected in a society as scientifically important change not only, as seen above, via location, but also with time. Gieryn (Nader, 1996. p.24) argues that boundaries are episodic not fixed, implying that at any historical moment, what is included and excluded may change.” Nader commented that maybe the very creation of a program alternative medicine at the US National Health Institute might signal changing boundaries, but empathized that some boundaries are very unlikely to change, and haven’t done so for a long time. (Nader, p.24)

Future examination needed, but it might be possible that medical field in Hungary is likely to be changing the same way, like the above mentioned American one.

Gieryn’s argument on episodic boundaries seems to be well connected to the medical field, which was also shown by Foucault, how the modern medicine was developed. (Giddens, p.210)

---

Prananadi is related to indigenous knowledge, as according to Prananadi studies, is an ancient knowledge with an origin in the East. Similarly and posterior to Nader, Nakata (he first Torres Straits Islander with a PhD at an Australian University) (2002) describes the contemporary way of seeing ‘indigenous knowledge’ (IK): current usage of the term does not refer to indigenous people’s knowledge, but as subset of what is more broadly referred to as IK. Until the 1980’s IK surfaced in very few academic disciplines (e.g. anthropology, development sociology), now IK surfaces in academic and scientific circles. He notes IK is a different thing in different places to different people, and that while this supposed to be a positive thing, still it is similar to former colonial enterprises, which co-opted land, resources, and labor in the interest of their own prosperity through trade and value-adding. IK as a system of knowledge is distanced from ‘scientific knowledge’ and from Western perspective in many systems recognized as ‘local knowledge’, which is unique to a given culture, being ‘oral, rural, holistic, powerless and culturally embedded’. There are other terms used interchangeably with it: local-, traditional-and traditional environmental, ecological-, and indigenous technical knowledge. Nakata highlights Agrawal (1995) who noted: “contradiction that the strategy of archiving and disseminating IK runs contradictory to the very conceptual basis what is seen the be ‘indigenous’ in IK...in the elevation of and talk about IK people commit themselves to a dichotomy between Indigenous and Western knowledge”, -the later implicitly suggest that Western knowledge is not culturally and socially embedded, which is not the case. Also highlighted a methodological problem of validating IK out of its cultural context may satisfy the outsider researcher, but can undermine the knowledge system itself. He by highlighting Agrawal about it, talks of possible integration, bridging of Western & IK as a new successful epistemic foundation. Also referring to the future Nakata highlights possible opportunities given by the emerging information technologies. In relation to the gap between IK and Western knowledge, this can be also a case between alternative medical practices like Prananadi and the conventional medical practices. The valuation of these kinds of practices, although it can be problematic or difficult to carry out, might reflect on the gap between the 2 different types of practices, just like the 2 different type of knowledge they plead.,<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that a scientific paper on an alternative healing technique cannot be perfect as in qualitative terms they refer to two different types of disciplines.

The term “stigma” in the medical field is also important as was pointed out by Goffman which created some changes within the medical field (Giddens, 2006). The term stigma refers to a social or individual attribute that is devalued and discredited in a particular social context. Goffman noted that stigma in terms of a ‘language relationship’ that can link attributes to particular stereotypes rather than prior objectified attributes. (Abi Kusow)

It can be seen that many alternative healing techniques have been stigmatized. E.g. books like “Trick or Treatment: Alternative Medicine on Trial” by Ernst & Singh is a good example. This book was recently published in Hungary and it informs people how and when an alternative medicine does not fit into the Western scientific framework and if so calls them all tricks. The writers describe more than 20 different alternative medicines as such tricks. By contrast the Prananadi healing technique proved to be successful for many people with illnesses described by doctors as ‘too advanced’ or ‘hopeless’.

Talking about scientific representations and objects, Fujimura highlights that these are constructed by scientists (Fujimura, 1998). The experience of bodily practices are subjective therefore it can only be documented via the subject’s themselves. Fujimura: In *Authorizing Knowledge in Science and Anthropology* says: “the feminist science critics argued that many biological theories about sex-differences are

more representative of social and cultural arrangements than of “nature” and have aimed their studies toward examining the social contexts within which such theories have been constructed.” (Fujimura, 1998 p358) Many others scholars highlight the fact that it is important to understand the effecting factors within sciences which can be seen within social and experimental sciences’ basic methodological studies linked with the terminology of ‘validity’. However, in academic journals and scientific studies in relation to its effects to everyday life it has been neglected many times.

Academic papers are divided in relation to the validity of alternative medicines. I believe that even though the uniting bridge between the valuation of indigenous knowledge and traditional Western knowledge is future related, it is worth to get as much information as possible about ‘stigmatized medicine’, for future references. This paper on Prananadi practitioners in Hungary would like to add to this information. Related opinion on Prananadi valuation was expressed by a medical student, who is also a Prananadi practitioner, Agi:

“It is true, that the effect of Prananadi cannot be demonstrated. There is no active substance, no energy changes which could be measured. However, there are the healings, and patients who are getting better by Prananadi. Of course, a scientist can simply react that these healing could happen spontaneously, or something else could have an effect, or for example in the cases of tumors, it could be the effect of chemotherapies. According to classical medicinal methods, Prananadi is a trick; this is the official version of it. But there are doctors, who can see the results of Prananadi and they bend a bow to Prananadi.”

## CHAPTER 2. INFORMATION ON PRANANADI & THE 3 ANALYTICAL UNITS

### 2.1. Information on Prananadi

“Prananadi is not only a healing technique, but a lifestyle.”

Botond, an interviewee.

Currently, there is no study book available on Prananadi and the masters who teach Prananadi differ slightly in their forthcoming explanations, I have instead quoted from the official Prananadi book, which was created by the Hungarian leader of Prananadi about basic information and its history, details of its symbols, illnesses and the effects of the Prananadi techniques.<sup>6</sup> The latter is also explained from my field notes, which I wrote on the Prananadi level 1 course. In relation to my questions about centralization of Prananadi, and how it differs from other alternative healing methods, I use quotes from interviewees.

Basic Prananadi information from the official book written by the Hungarian leader, which can also be found on his website, with the exact same words:

Prananadi means: absolute energy channel, universal vitality channel. The origin of the method is from 6,700BC when natural healing among people appeared and when humans were taught the healing power of plants, stones and water. This was a time when humans learnt use of energy and healing by symbols. Prana is the original fountain of every type of energy. Every level of life's manifestation depends on resonance and the quality of the intook and the not-used Pranana (absolute energy). Prana is a complex energy system without which the physical body cannot exist. Prana (life-

---

<sup>6</sup> This book was only public for less than 3 years, as it got into the hands of people who were not practitioners, or in the Prananadi world it was spread as „to people who were not mature enough for such information”

energy), which comes through everything, is in continuous and never ending motion, resonance, and flow. By their vortical movement they connect to each other and create energy-centers in the whole universe, the solar system, and can be found anywhere. The effect of Prananadi is that it supports life-processes and has an effect on some of the levels of life-manifestation. It adapts to every living (creatures) and non-inert individual ~~pretenses~~. It supports the process of self-development. It has positive effects on healing processes, soothes pain, it helps to beat dejection caused by fear, resentment, anger, depression, anguish, anxiety. It helps fighting back strong physical and psychological strains. It has a positive effect on our relationships to other people. It facilitates creativity and performance. It fosters self-recognition and easier adaptation. In 3000 BC written materials appeared about natural healing methods. Prananadi does not belong to any religion; therefore anyone can learn it and ask for its usage. In 2004 I protected the Prananadi name and technique at the Patent Office, so we can keep this ancient tradition clear within European law and from mixed with other things than the technique itself. (*prananadi.hu*)

Up until 2 years ago, it was nearly impossible to find any relevant information using the internet about Prananadi due to their continuously changing website about the organization.<sup>7</sup> Prananadi spreads solely from person to person by word of mouth.<sup>8</sup> Among Prananadi practitioners it is only ethical to heal people without any expectation of why or how it works. They can never sell healing for money.<sup>9</sup> Prananadi seems to be a closed system with an informal, although at first sight hierarchical, social structure. There are however courses at different levels which build on each other. Anyone can practice Prananadi from as early as they are able to

---

<sup>7</sup> The Prananadi website is continuously changing. At the beginning in the early 1990's they used to be very open and forthcoming giving out much related information on Prananadi. However they departed from this openness and only recently has there appeared once again further background information on Prananadi. The website today does not provide as much enlightenment in to this subject as it used to other than the only printed book have always published.

<sup>8</sup> From around the beginning of 2010 the renewed Prananadi website shows no more contact information other than the 'usual' email address of the Hungarian Prananadi leader, which could lead people on a Prananadi course, but it lacks basic information on courses including their cost or locality. However, from 2011 there are many websites made by practitioners, calling for people to come to their courses.

<sup>9</sup> I learned in one of my fieldwork analysis on going for Prananadi treatment as a patient that despite this philosophy there are practitioners who give a different impression.

concentrate, level 2. from eight years old. In Hungary, as the Hungarian leader of Prananadi once replied to me, “There are nearly 48,000 Prananadi practitioners”. I met people who practice Prananadi by chance through a friend of mine at the end of 2007.

### 2.1.1. The history of Prananadi

The origin of this method is 6700 BC. It was the time when natural healings among people appeared, and the time when humans were taught about the healing effects of plants, stones and water. It was the time when humankind learnt the usage of the energy & healing with symbols. From the official book

The history of Prananadi is taught on one level 1 Prananadi course according to which it originates from the pre-religious time, 6700 BC. Tibet was the first who preserved it. In 1972 there was an expedition from the U.S. to explore the Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan cultures. They could only get into Tibet with their Chinese guards, but Tibetan people only opened up for them when they got rid of the guards. When their money was tight, their time was up and the expedition finished. One of them, an American with German origin, went back to Tibet (through Nepal this time) to explore more in the area; he incidentally came across with Prananadi practices. It was extremely difficult to get into a monastery to study this healing technique, but eventually he managed; and ended up studying there for eighteen years, and reached twenty-one levels. Following that, he taught it in Germany then in the U.S. under a different name for thirty-eight people. One of them was the Hungarian leader. According to the same teacher, the Hungarian leader has got permission to teach it in Hungary under the original name Prananadi.



According to the Hungarian leader, he has been teaching Prananadi since 1993 in Hungary; it first had the name Tibetan-Reiki; in order to not to get mixed with other practices, they changed the name into Prananadi, which they choose themselves.

<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, some of the Hungarian teachers occasionally do some courses in Canada and in the U.S., however they primarily teach in Hungary. Every year about 30 people goes to Nepal for seven to ten days to study further with the monks. As I am not on a high enough level within Prananadi studies so that I could know about it directly. There are stories around the heart of Prananadi which tell of an interesting switch.

The answer to my question, “who is the master of the Hungarian leader”, from Botond a practitioner, was:

Well, he is the one who could answer that question. It used to be in Tibet. But now, as much as I heard, this knowledge is not in Tibet anymore. Even the Dalai Lama left Tibet. Similarly, to Buddhism or Zen, Prananadi has been spread all over the world and the knowledge of Prananadi is only in Tibet in traces. People do say that it will go back to Tibet again, and maybe it will happen from Hungary.<sup>11</sup>

Agi, another interviewee for the question how does Prananadi differ from other alternative healing methods, said the following:

“The difference which Prananadi has in comparison to other healing methods is that it is secretive, and everyone has the possibility to develop, with the courses. You can be a healer but also a teacher. At other techniques, this two is much more insular. For example, if you want to learn to be able to use acupuncture, you have to go to Germany, to take classes, enroll into a school, where you study for

---

<sup>10</sup> He does not refer to the others on his webpage. There is a kind of mismatch of information is an interesting aspect within Prananadi masters, and probably could be related to the live-chain of information within Prananadi practitioners.

<sup>11</sup> When the interviewee talked about Tibet, meant the area of Tibet, including Nepal.

years; and of course you have to pay an awful lot of money for it. But you either a student or you heal, one or the other. In Nadi,<sup>12</sup> this two are both included.”

### 2.1.2. Phenomenology

Prananadi bodily practices are related to phenomenology. Traditional phenomenology focuses on the subjective, practical and social condition of experiences and philosophy of mind, (some scholars made a distinction between phenomenology and philosophy of mind, others didn't) especially on the neural substrate of experience, on how conscious experience and mental representation is intentionality grounded in one's brain activity. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

William James more than hundred years ago explained: "We don't run because we are scared, we are scared because we run." (1908) Some classical phenomenologists, like Husserl & Merleau-Ponty also spoke of pure description of lived experiences. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia "...Phenomenology has been practiced without the name for many centuries. When Hindu, Buddhist philosophers reflected on states of consciousness achieved in a variety of meditative states, they were practicing phenomenology..." However, the biggest names related to phenomenology are Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and Beauvoir from 1940.

Merleau-Ponty focused on the 'body-image', our experience of our own body and its significance in our activities. He rejected the duality of mind and body, "my

---

<sup>12</sup> Nadi is a nickname for Prananadi within practitioners.

body is, as it were, me in my engaged action with things I perceive including other people”. The non-dualistic exploration of our embodied experience pre-occupied Merleau-Ponty throughout his life. He even criticized his work “Phenomenology of Perception” as it was unsuccessful in getting beyond the dualistic way of thinking. He emphasized the philosophical importance of the act of learning by implication, training, distinguished lived space, phenomenal space, and objective space. (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Among alternative therapies methods nowadays, to unite body and mind is a common feature. In this sense Pranandi’s character of not keeping a mind and body dichotomy is aiming for its unity, which is not unique but common. The way it is combined with other traits of Pranandi philosophy, of which will be shown later on, is however unique.

Phenomenology of Pranandi is learning and healing through one’s body, when practitioners described their own experiences, they talking in phenomenological terms, and about their experience of embodiment.

### **2.1.3. Embodiment**

It seems that scholars go back to phenomenology and there are more and more work related to embodiment. As Pranandi’s ideology of self and its relation to body and illnesses can be strongly related to phenomenology, just like the works of the following scholars.

In an interesting article by Adenzato & Garbarini (2006) talk Bourdieu’s Practice

Theory which says that knowledge of the world derives from existential preconditions which are rooted in the experience of being immersed in the world of objects and other individuals with whom to act and interact. Habitus is a concept for second nature, or as a structured and structuring body, which incorporates immanent structures in its self, but also structures our perception of the world and guides our actions through it. Just like the paradigm of Embodied cognition and Merleau-Ponty's analyses of body concept.

One of these scholars is Michal Pagis, whose paper aims to correct the existing bias in that he views self-reflexivity as a discursive, abstract, and symbolic process. It offers a framework for embodied self-reflexivity. Vipassana meditation (related to Buddhism) is a cultivated version of an everyday use of the body in the process of self-reflexivity, a use that has so far been neglected in sociological thought. This study, therefore, extends Merleau-Ponty's claim that the body is a "mirror of our being" and a "natural self" (2002:198). The body is not only a natural pre-reflective self; it is an important medium for self-reflexivity. We constantly respond to ourselves through an embodied feedback loop.

We eat when we are hungry and move when we are in pain. We respond to our bodies automatically, often catching ourselves a moment after the response. This reflexive capacity of the body led Bourdieu to claim that culture is first ingrained in the body and in our habitual responses to the world. If this is indeed the case, then the awareness of these embodied feedback loops is an important source of self-reflexivity and a channel through which self-autonomy and agency are generated. (Pagis, p. 24)

By highlighting themselves as ethnographers and the importance of local knowledge, Feld & Basso bring philosophy into the picture by Casey's view of how a

close relationship between embodiment and emplacement brings the problem of place into close resonance with the anthropological problem of knowing 'local knowledge'. After phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, Casey examines how to be in a place is to know and become aware of one's very consciousness and sensuous presence in the world emphasizing that "place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience – the site of powerful fusion of self, space and time" (Feld & Basso, p.10)

#### 3.1.4. Symbolic anthropology

This MA project is related to the approach of symbolic anthropology; I show how Prananadi practitioners interpret their healing culture. Symbolic anthropology, which is a form of cultural anthropology, emphasizes its subject, which is about the way people understand and interpret their environment, actions and others' expressions in their society. These interpretations create a shared cultural system of meaning. After Spencer (1996:535) "Symbolic anthropology studies symbols and the processes (myth and rituals) by which human assign meanings to these symbols in order to address fundamental questions about human social life." Symbolic anthropology is governed by two major premises: first are the beliefs, when they are understood as a meaning of a cultural system, it can be easily become comprehensible; the second is that actions are guided by interpretation. Symbolic anthropology was a reaction to structuralism, which separated actors and actions, also was more grounded in linguistics and semiotics; and materialism. The most famous symbolic anthologists are scholars like Turner, Geertz and Schneider. Symbolic anthropology is based on

cross-cultural comparison, and “examines symbols from different aspect of social life, rather than from one aspect at a time isolated from the rest.” It turned anthropology towards issues of culture and interpretation; and turned to other disciplines like sociology and philosophy. (as.ua wp)

Hermeneutics was first used to critically interpret religious texts. Nowadays, I smore related to Woodward: (1996:555) “it is a combination of empirical investigation and subsequent subjective understanding of human phenomena.” (as.ua wp)

## **2.2. Organizational structure**

I highlight 3 analytical units in this essay: Organizational structure, Bodily practices and Knowledge production.

### **2.2.1. Within the Prananadi organization**

When one starts Prananadi courses, after completing the first course has a basic idea of elementary information of the history, of the ideology of this healing practice, (e.g. it is very close to Buddhism) but there is information, which one has to work hard to get; one of this is its organizational structure. I got most of this information from informal talks with fellow participants. Also, one get to know basic information on the next level course, (e.g. its cost, or the length of the course) only when got invited via email from one’s master only weeks before the course; unless one has friends who already completed the given level. It is like one always at least a step behind in knowing, - sometimes I did have a feeling that we have been kept in the dark on purpose. It reminded me of the book: Human games by Eric Berne, as ‘playing hard to get’ can make people feel, when

they finally got the information, person or anything which was hard to get; they appreciate it more. I believe it also has an effect on the strength of the group cohesion, all along in Prananadi studies.

The Prananadi organization is a hierarchical and newly structured system. There is a leader, a middle aged man who learned Prananadi studies directly from the first ever European leader who had studied Prananadi for more than two decades in Tibet. The Hungarian leader has been teaching Prananadi in Hungary since 1992. He has reached level 16.<sup>13</sup> He has a few direct students but leads this national organization with almost forty eight thousand practitioners and socializes with other masters while continuing on with his own studies. He also treats patients. This attitude is the same for masters all over the country. They all do as much as they can on their own Prananadi level in relation to teaching and healing others.

Within this hierarchical system everyone can choose 'upwards' of what they want to learn whether to go up to a higher (mandatory) level within the system or an extra optional course (e.g. Prananadi massage course), but practitioners & masters cannot choose 'downwards' within the system. By downwards I mean that teachers/masters have a strict schedule about the courses they teach, when, what and how. There is a central education system in a way that all masters are supposed to teach the same 'material'. Additionally, there are programs which are not mandatory but for

---

<sup>13</sup> The question what is the Hungarian leader's level was asked directly on a level 1 introduction Prananadi course from my master. His answer was "I don't know, I think he is on level 16. But I can't remember. – This last sentence is a slogan within Prananadi practitioners; it means that people are not allowed to talk about it, as it is a secret.

social and other reasons they all want to go to (e.g. summer camp) and they arrange schedules around them as if it would be mandatory. For practitioners after a certain level, in time they should retake previous courses but to go there as helpers or just to accompany a friend who has just started or perhaps to try and invite others to do the course. They of course do not have to do the course but if they feel part of the social system and enjoy it there, they end up taking the course. People I know are doing it by themselves. Which is supported by, the relevant part of Botond's description of the organization system:

“There are 2 reasons why I go to be a volunteer at a master. One is that, if you want to be a master of initiation then, there are 3 levels which you have to complete, and which are not part of the mandatory basic Prananadi studies. In the first round for 2 years you have to do hospitalizing under the hand of 5 different masters, you have to go there and be a helper, you have to be part of the practices. When you reach the stage that you can be an initiation master, then for a while you can only do it with your master in presence. The second reason is that when you treat other people, -which are part of the level 1 course, where I went to be a helper last weekend, - it gives you energy as well. So it is a good thing. It is very important that you can learn a lot from students, what kind of questions they ask, with this, you gain further knowledge which is very important...I feel good there, and it is also good for testing my knowledge.”

Centralization of the organization is unique in a way that it is not reflected in a typically centralized localization in Hungary. The center of Prananadi is indeed not in the capital, but in Szolnok, where the leader lives. He frequently commutes to Budapest. Most of the masters I came across or heard of do not practice in Budapest but in the surrounding Pest County. There are Prananadi courses which can only be taught by one teacher in the country. The level 1 course and the yearly 10 days of Prananadi summer camp are open to anyone. Usually



family and friends of the practitioners accompany them.

There are 107 'official' Pranadi masters who have done the official courses, therefore obtained the Hungarian leader's acknowledgment and whose names are listed on the Hungarian leader's website, which is in fact the official Pranadi website. Up to a year ago, in June 2010, there were another two Pranadi masters who have also created a website and have obtained permission for it from the leader; this number is much higher today in 2011. However, having a website does not have any special meaning within the organization, for example the only Pranadi reincarnation teacher in the country does not have his own website, but has a webpage which is almost impossible to get to, unless one knows the direction.<sup>14</sup>

A person supposes to complete up to level 3 with the same master. One can change master but only for a very good reason<sup>15</sup>. A course is taught in the master's house usually where everyone goes in the morning by 9 am and can take a couple of hours or maximum a couple of days. Students usually cannot leave the house until the end of the course. I only met three Pranadi masters in the last 2.5 years. They have all completed higher education and live outside of Budapest, in the Pest County.

---

<sup>14</sup> Another interesting online information is the Romanian Pranadi Association. (pranadi.ro)

<sup>15</sup> I changed master, because my first master, a woman in her late 30's found my questions irritating and as she was a fairly new master she had groups of no more than 6 people and I wanted to socialize in a bigger group. The new master has a more laid back attitude to questions. He is a middle aged man and his students' group sizes are between 30-70 people.

The Prananadi organization has changed a lot in the last couple of years. This change has been captured well, by Botond:

“Prananadi is a growing community. It has reached a critical number. Therefore, many people deal with the same things, so it has strength. There are some community building aspects, like the summer camps or the mobile-fleet<sup>16</sup> or there are the courses including club-days<sup>17</sup>. Or now after the masters, there are different titles for different groups, like there are the X.Y.-group (with the master of X.Y.) or the AB-group.”

## 2.2.2. The Prananadi organization and its relation to the outside world

### 2.2.2.1. *Prananadi position within the Hungarian medical field*

As the major and only power is connected to the classical healing methods within the official field of medicine (Lomnici, 2008), one would refer to the Prananadi healing technique as unimportant and irrelevant.<sup>18</sup> However, under the official layer, in real life medical practices there is a different picture of the Hungarian medical field. Many people choose non-conventional healing techniques instead of the classical official methods.<sup>19</sup> Possible reasons are having less faith in governmental institutions and corruption in the political sphere. The media effects, including advertisements,

<sup>16</sup> The mobile-fleet is a about a year old and is a telephone network system for practitioners which after a small amount of monthly money is payed to a mobile company Prananadi practitioners can talk to each other for free.

<sup>17</sup> Club days are days given by masters who invite his/her students to talk about their experiences, how their life is going, etc.

<sup>18</sup> The Hungarian Law only talks about conventional medicine, which is by doctors who were educated in certain 'the official' Hungarian institutions, and the rest becomes non-conbventional medicine, which is only complementary, by law. ' The natural healing activity of the Government Regulation consists of the following:

1. § The scope of this Regulation, naturopathic and non-conventional (hereinafter referred to as non-conventional) medical procedures covered by the application. The non-conventional medical procedures in a health care activity (the activity), which is complementary to conventional healing methods, the cases provided a substitute.

2. § (1) The health informatics and health care professionals other than the person who received advanced medical training, as well as a clinical psychologist and clinical child psychologist in the activities of non-conventional vocational training course (the course) and successfully pass the examination after the completion of personnel.

<sup>19</sup> 13There is no available statistical data of the amount of people choosing alternative healing technique in Hungary today. In1991. Antal & Szanto survey said that 6.6% of the population used alternative medicine. (Buda 2006)

the fact that medical knowledge is easily accessible on the internet, forums on any type of healing techniques or even for financial reasons as alternative healing techniques can be cheaper and more convenient in relation to many different aspects within human life. It is also interesting to note, as mentioned earlier, that there are nearly forty eight thousand Prananadi practitioners, although they are not all advertising themselves, and there is not much information on the internet about them. Prananadi practitioners are not allowed to ask money for the healing practice; however they are allowed to accept gifts.

Just like in other Western societies, Hungarian medicine is based on the bio-medical model which says that illness is a breakdown in the normal functioning of the body. It has to be treated by trained medical experts. The mind and the body need to be treated separately, where the patient is not a person, rather an ill body in a pathological state. In the past couple of decades there has been a tremendous amount of criticism of this model, some of which claim that conventional medicine appears to be above any other remedies or healing techniques and that anything “unscientific” is also inferior. (Giddens, 2006. p209-214)

#### **2.2.2.2.      *The organization of Prananadi and other alternative medicines***

Prananadi is such a closed system it has no direct relation to other non-conventional medicines. However, some extra Prananadi courses, which are not the mandatory courses, include similar techniques to other alternative medicines. There are four possible examples: The first one is astrology. One of the practitioners I talked to, who is on level 6, said that the dates of Prananadi courses has to be

approved by the national Prananadi leader as this practitioner thinks that courses have to start in line with a new moon because Prananadi deals with energy and the new moon has a positive effect on it. The second one is related to massage, which is an alternative healing technique in itself. The Prananadi organization offers Prananadi massage courses as well.

Another alternative healing technique is hypnosis, which happens while the patient is in a subconscious state. While Prananadi reincarnation traveling is similar to the hypnotic state the patient remains in conscious state but it works from their subconscious. According to Prananadi philosophy, and many other Eastern philosophies, which deal with reincarnation, experiences gained from previous lives are stored in one's aura.

The fourth is Hemi-Sync a related alternative technique, which is a protected under U.S. law, the same way Prananadi is protected in Hungary. It is about the synchronization of the brain. Prananadi Hemi-Sync is the Hungarian version of the original U.S. course. It is similar to mind control techniques.

### **2.3. Bodily Practices**

Bodily practices are the core acts in Prananadi. Everything is about bodily practices. Learning and healing through one body is simply put all that Prananadi is about. In order to show how one gets introduced to bodily practices within the organization I quote from my fieldwork notes of a repeated level 1 course I did last year: "After we

all introduced ourselves, the master talks how Prananadi practitioners are a big family. He asked everyone to call him by his first name and vice versa. He said that Prananadi is actually equal to learning and giving perception. After he talked for half an hour of his own personal experiences he asked everyone to sit in a large circle holding each other's hands. We then performed a particular meditation on leaving bad things behind and opening up to new and positive things. Then everyone got a piece of metal which was a thin L shaped stick made from copper. We learned how to clean it, hold it and ask "yes or no?" from it, whilst still holding it.<sup>14</sup> Then, as was described in the Introduction, paired up and with this metal rod in one hand, with the other hand we scanned each other's physical aura (about 10cm from the person's body) from top to bottom. When the metal stick moved, we checked that the other hand was exactly on their physical aura. That was a location where the other person had a problem in their body. (E.g. at the knee, around the stomach). After couple of minutes of practicing, it worked for almost everyone.

The use of this<sup>20</sup> is very simple and bodily matters are surprisingly very accurate. I thought about it many times, how this could be possible, as this is on level 1, therefore the other person is usually a complete stranger, and the use of the stick is new as well. Every other Prananadi act, such as treatment for oneself or for a patient, reincarnation traveling or even massage is through one's body and achieved without any tools. There is very little written instruction, mainly everyone learns through bodily practices. The technique of not using anything just universal energies is also a

---

<sup>20</sup> We held the rod in a special way that allows it to bend and weave. Then we asked the rod to show us where is 'yes'. The direction the rod weaves to is the 'yes' side. Then we asked different questions and the rod answers them. The point about using the stick is that as we hold it, the answers are 'within' us however we sort of answer in a way that it is non-conscious. This is one of the reasons why I am writing this paper as it seems to be working!

very unique feature, most other healing practices are receiving energy from either the healer's body or some outside creations such as machines. Therefore Pranadi practitioners after treating a patient feel more energetic, as my new master replied "is like being put on in electrical socket, to being recharged, like a mobile phone."

Pranadi uses universal energy, not bio-energy. The first one is already around in the universe or environment and is engaging in Pranadi practices. It flows through the practitioner's body without using up his/her bio-energy. That is a unique feature of Pranadi as there are methods which uses up the healer's own energy therefore the Pranadi practitioner can use up as much energy to heal as they wish because the 'storage' of this energy is endless.

Ellias (1939) provided a central role for emotion in the socialization of natural and bodily functions. As he puts it: "feelings of shame is clearly a social function molded according to the social structure". As Lyon and Barbalet - who said that the active bodies are also emotional bodies, and emotion is embodied (Csordas, 1994:57) - explain it, feelings like embarrassment or shame constitute to check one's own behavior, and to enforce conformity on oneself with what the subject feels to be appropriate standards. (Csordas, 1994:49) Conformity can be a huge part of adapting to a new environment, for example when one goes to see what Pranadi is about on a level 1 course, and suddenly end up queuing for initiation. It is not only conformity which can lead people to go along with the Pranadi experience; I talked to many who were there by simply being curious about Pranadi, what knowledge, or/and bodily practices it can offer. Relating to emotional embodiment,

practitioners' emotional wellbeing is another important factor which keeps up feelings of belonging. It feels good to be in the courses, anyone can leave so you are not forced to be there, and if you have some problems there is a great possibility that people can help you by giving a Prananadi 'treatment'. Also, the atmosphere is pleasant. As one of the interviewee said 'many people get ill in their own environment and getting out of it by going to a Prananadi course for couple of days, can help them to bounce out of it.' Additionally, energy gain people get in the course, can causes a kind of euphoria, which tend to make people of wanting more of it.

### 2.3.1. Healing & Body

I have no experience of healing with the help of Prananadi, but have heard many fellow practitioners, who had. However, I did experience that starting to focus on my 'inner' self, did have a calming effect, especially when doing it regularly.

An about a year old Prananadi website, created by a young male Prananadi master, a direct student of the Hungarian leader explains the Prananadi philosophy of healing in detail:

"Prananadi is self-generative and a healing system, which helps in many areas of the Prananadi user's life. To use Prananadi is very simple and easy, therefore anyone can learn it. This healing method was kept for thousands of years in Tibet, and for a European scholar after many years of learning they allow the teaching of Prananadi in the West. Rendition of the Prananadi studies still happens according to its traditions. It is known in Hungary from 1992. Prananadi has different levels of courses. The first level of Prananadi studies has an effect primarily on the physical body; the second level has more on an effect on the emotions. It helps one to reach a more peaceful and balanced life. By Prananadi, everyday life becomes less stressful and feels less

anxious. Experiences show that those, who practice Prananadi studies become much stronger and energetic. It can change one's relations to other people; also one's environment can change towards the person. This simple and warm method helps us to live our life more consciously, to develop our personalities, and to take life our difficulties in a lighter way. It helps us to heal in the physical level and gives us the skills to heal our family and friends...Self-development and healing go strongly together. The way one lives one's life, the decisions one makes, all the thoughts and feelings have an effect on the person's health. As our feelings determine our well-beings/the way you feel, the same way our general well-being in a long-run determines our health. Every change in our feelings and thoughts has the same effect on the physical body. A person, with lots of stresses, anxieties, and full of fears, continuously weakens his body. After a while all this negative resonance will appear in the weaker part of the body, usually in a form of an illness. Usually on the point which was weakened with our thoughts for years. Therefore not only the illness itself and its characteristics are important but the locality of the illness as well...By the illnesses we get stimulation to think what is what makes us suffer in our life and what are we not doing correctly. When the recognition and the changes take place the healing will follow soon..."

The learning of the Prananadi technique is strongly related to *meditation* and other self-reflective experiences. Pagis in Embodied Self-Reflexivity says that hyper-awareness of the body is at the base of meditation and, for meditators, it is a source of healing and self-transformative experiences. In fact, this awareness of the body is the anchor for an important form of self-reflexivity. (Pagis, 2008). Contrary to orthodox assumptions, Feiler highlights that learning through the body is discussed as a valued alternative way of knowing what reconnects the mind and body (Freiler, 2008). Wilde shows that for people who experience chronic illness or serious injury, changes occur not just within their physical bodies but also in their embodiments, that is, how they view the world through their bodies. He highlights philosophies which underlie embodied knowledge, in particular, philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Polanyi, which were explored yielding two new ways to understand the body. The body as a 'silent



partner' fosters an appreciation of the body's own. For such patients, dualistic (mind–body) notions of the body as object and the mind as subject can devalue experiences that are necessary for healing and for managing everyday problems related to their illness or injury. Kovach refers to proprioception of the body's moving mass constitutes a mode of knowing that resonates strongly with the experience of self, not only across religious traditions but also within the physical sciences (Kovach, 2002). Others refer to reduced stress experienced with cancer patients by a self-healing program based on Indo-Tibetan tradition (Loizzo, 2009).

Bodily memory: Contrary to classical medicine, which says that memory is located in the brain, Interviewee B however said something which mirrors a *unique* aspect of Prananadi's philosophy:

“Illnesses are a kind of learning through the body. The memory of the information is not kept in the brain, but in the body. The body works as a kind of memory, for example your leg hurts.”

### 2.3.2. Reincarnation traveling

*My own experience of reincarnation travelling was one of the surprising ones. I was pushing for over a year before I finally tried it with a female friend of mine in her late 30's, who kept asking me all along. As usual, I was very skeptical. I went to her house, we were alone. I had to lay on the floor and she lite a candle and an insect, asked me to follow here instruction, and set next to me. I had to close my eyes and she did something above my forehead, which after a while made me feel a bit weird, I felt little tingle on my forehead. Then, I was asked to imagine that I climbed up to an endless tree, then I was above sky-level, in a white light then getting close to the*

*Earth and I had arrive with feet down. I had to say who I was, how old, what I was wearing, human, male/female, and where I was, also what in what era. The funny thing about it was that I could sense the room, the smells, and the noises while I could actually answer the questions. And what actually scared me a little was that I started crying at one point when I was describing a crisis. I was a hunter in Germany in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who lost his family by going working in the hills, while some wolves came to my house and killed my family. As it happened to me, I cannot deny the fact that something did work. However, the reasoning it could be tricky: did I go back to one of my previous lives, or was it just something in me unconsciously, from a film I saw yesterday for example? - The answer is unknown so far.*

On Prananadi reincarnation traveling, when people go back to their previous lives, it is frequent that they feel pain somewhere within their body. It is also common that the person when arriving for their previous life first have bodily perceptions, (e.g. it is cold, I am in pain, I am scared, I am sitting, I am running etc.) and the personal identity, locality and timing only follows afterwards. Even though, for scientific it can sound unscientific, one day it might be known just the same as the phantom limb-effects<sup>21</sup>. (Hunter & Katz, 2003)

Some more information on reincarnation is given in the Prananadi book:

“Reincarnation is the school of the soul. We call reincarnation, the migration of the soul through life and death. It is not covering the truth that everything stops by death. It does not exist in nature. Like it is taught in science: “material does not perish only alter, it is the same in reincarnation. When life-functions stop, only the physical life stops, but consciousness (mind), or in other words the soul, lives on. The mind makes a continuity possible, with which helps the soul to stay the same, despite of the constant migration in psychical bodies...Death is not no-life but the opposite poles of the life. Death is also a state, a gate, which separates the ones who are on physical plain (the livings)

---

<sup>21</sup> A loss or amputation of a limb, can lead to abnormal body awarress. A person still feels like he would still have the arm or leg attached. It has a neurological explanation. Also anyone going to a gym comes across another bodily memory example: memory of the muscle

from the ones who are on a different plain (death)...When we reach a certain level of development; we have an insight into our own reincarnation traveling. To born and to die are the same state, it depends where you are looking it from...Every time we reborn, we get a possibility to get more conscious. One life, is the result of our previous learning...Every human's tasks and problems suit the degree of the development, the person has right now. Children have their possibilities to get into their reincarnation up until around the age of 5, but it can be less by their parents' objections. One can even find the reasons for an illness in a reincarnation travel, let it be psychic or physical...Everyone has the right to believe or not in reincarnation, but they need to be aware that the code of reincarnation suits the code of our universe."

Prananadi reincarnation can be completed by 3 different courses, all of which has a requirement of completing a certain level within the basic Prananadi course. Reincarnation traveling is made between 2 people. One is the traveler; the other is the one who conducts the traveling. About the experience of the reincarnation traveling Botond explained:

„I cannot say more than what is on the Prananadi website about it. We never ask money from each other when we do reincarnation traveling between us practitioners. What really works in it for me is that the person who travels usually comes up with a problem I need to solve in my life too. So while the other person travels, I deal with the problem too, and it really works. It makes you to see your problem from the outside, which really helps. It is not incidental who you are traveling with. Everyone whose travel I led, made me see some of my own problems too...What is really valuable in it, is that the other person trusts you. Sometimes, it is the first time that a person sees you, and trusting someone like that is really valuable. “

For Foucault bio-power is a technology of power, which is a way of managing people as a group. The distinctive quality of this political technology is that it allows for the control of entire populations. Bio-power is literally having power over other bodies, 'an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of

bodies and the control of populations' "(Foucault wp). In a different context, if one practices Pranayama a lot, according to Pranayama studies, they could be capable of having power over their surrounded situation or happenings via their Pranayama knowledge, similarly to Foucault's bio-power but if they don't use it ethically, they could lose it, or get punished for it.<sup>22 23</sup> As Botond highlighted:

"This kind of punishment is more of a punishment a person gives to himself, than by an outsider. When you make a decision it always has some consequences. One puts himself in self-punishment, or as the reincarnation teacher said it 'you put yourself in self-sucking'. You always have to behave in a way that you can take it on; you do what is the best within your own circumstances."

In Pranayama medical practices practitioners deal directly with the human body without any mediation between them and their patients, therefore it seems that they are doing exactly the opposite of the traditional Western medicine practitioners in which machines and other administrative actors play a usual part.

Latour's (1996) in his work on inter-objectivity reworked an old anthropological distinction between the 'complexity' and 'complication' of social relations. Complexity refers to the continuous instability in social relations, which requires constant attention and effort on the part of the participant. His example came from primate social groups, where members are working continuously on maintaining their stability of their place in the group hierarchy. In the case of Pranayama, the hierarchical and

---

<sup>22</sup> To avoid possible conceptual confusion I mention here about bio and universal as different types of energy, which is related neither to Foucault's bio-power, nor to the bio-medical model.

<sup>23</sup> Practitioners have to swear not to talk about secrets. Masters tell stories of how people were previously punished when doing so.

rigid social structure makes it possible so there is no need for people to work for their status within the organization. Complication denotes a framing of social relations by virtues of a *technical mediation* that formalizes the terms of participation. Object e.g. glass partitions in banks, cat's-eyes on roads, achieve this. "Latour's point is that although objects make human relationships less complex, they complicate them infinitely, as we must now accommodate or negotiate the various affordances of the objects that intimately participate in all our relationships." (Brown & Middleton, 2003)

Prananadi shows a *unique* feature if one looks at those practitioners that do not use anything other than their hands. At the same time, it could be also seen from a different angle, Prananadi practitioners use mediators, but drawing parallels with the distinction of verbal and non-verbal communication, it is indirect, so cannot be seen, but still can have an effect. E.g. the room the healing takes place, its order, decorations, the colors, usage of candle or incense. There is lots of literature on the mediation within medicines and other sciences.<sup>24</sup> Technical mediation is part of the normal classical medical practices, while they are missing from most of the alternative healing techniques, at first sight they are definitely lacking from Prananadi practices. Practitioners created audio compact disks for meditation or for background for meditation or other practices for helping with the timing for the Prananadi

---

<sup>24</sup> E. g. Milgram's experiment which was in relation to explaining cruelties made by humans in the second world war, and showed that today the majority of the people would be capable of killing masses of people; also that they were much more likely to do so, if there are mediators between them and the consequences of their actions, e.g. they only needed to press bottom in order to kill, they do not see the consequences of their action, or they were instructed by an authority figure in a white gown. Also, the more mediators there were, the more likely it was that people would be causing harm for other people. (Milgram, 1963)

treatment.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.4. Knowledge production

As most of the Pranadi practitioners I met with, I also found Asian way of knowledge production interesting and new in many ways, as it is oppositional to Westerners' way: Everything comes from within, explaining illnesses for example, as something that you have created, in your present or previous lives is very different from that it has just happened to you. Because of these differences one can feel that Pranadi groups share an exciting knowledge which can also strengthen the group cohesion.

In relation to Pranadi, there is migration of knowledge from Tibet to Germany, then from there to Hungary and continuing on to the United States and Canada, where nowadays some Pranadi teachers go to teach. Pranadi dates back to pre-religious times as the Hungarian leader states in his book and on his website from 6700 BC. Knowledge is gained via a live chain of people by masters and by people's own bodily practices. Practitioners can freely<sup>26</sup> walk away anytime, one interviewee said in relation to 'professional' knowledge within Pranadi practices:

"You need to have information to be able to get quality. For a better performance, you need to learn more techniques within Pranadi. When you do the reincarnation course, it helps in your other Pranadi studies. For example my cousin had chickenpox, I asked my

---

<sup>25</sup> I have heard from one Pranadi master, also from some practitioners that the timing-cd-s, are only for Europeans, and for beginners; as European people, who have done the practices enough times interiorize the timing and do not need this help, the same true for monks in Asia. Also, probably for these previous reasons, I had the impression that the use of the cd-s has little negative connotations in higher level of Pranadi practices.

<sup>26</sup> This kind of freedom might be only on the surface, as I will explain it later.

rod, whether I could help with the techniques I learnt, it did not let me<sup>27</sup>. But I know that maybe in the next course will learn something which I can use for some illnesses like this. The more I learn the more tools I have to heal.”

A possible reason for this, which also shows a unique feature of the Prananadi organization is that if there is any kind of manipulation then it is not done by an authoritarian leader figure, which are common in sects or other religious communities, but somehow it has a profound effect within the person, which comes out through self-motivation, curiousness, wanting to heal or other reasons which makes a practitioner to stay within the Prananadi organization. I will talk about it in more details in the next chapter.

#### 2.4.1. Migration of knowledge

Prananadi organizational culture is closely related to the Asian cultural way of 'Yoga', therefore Buddhism is also closely linked to the Nadi-teaching, but Prananadi is not part of Buddhism. It is not a religion or even contains partly- religious healing techniques. It is possibly one of the many different Asian styles of healing techniques which became widespread in Western societies. The final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a steep increase in Buddhist practices in the West which was mainly due both to Asian immigration and to the growing attraction of non-Asians to Buddhist practices. Between these global organizations and within these networks there occurred multidirectional global flows of Buddhist teachers, practitioners, information, ideas and, above all, practices (Loss, 2010). For about the migration of Prananadi

---

<sup>27</sup> In Prananadi practices, you always have to ask from your rod, or other materials, whether you can complete a certain technique in order to help.

knowledge please see the history of Prananadi chapter.

#### **2.4.2. Knowledge production within the Prananadi organization**

There are levels up to 16 in Hungary, which can be reached in about 2 decades. The levels are all build on each other, in a hierarchical order. There are no books, or references in contemporary Hungary; so the only way to learn is to go to courses. The reason for this is because of the importance of the live chain in spreading information. It is not the same to read a book, than to gain knowledge through your body with a master around, from whom, you can ask related questions, also you can learn from your fellow students. It is a different type of experience.

There used to be a small booklet which included the symbols which are now secret. As said earlier, the book was even put on the internet, but then the leader took it off, and stopped the printing of the book, as people used them inappropriately. Using Prananadi knowledge inappropriately means, using it unethically. On the official Prananadi website there is a part under The Codes of Ethics, which includes a serious amount of rules and regulations. Under the title of: „Extracts of the Hungarian Prananadi Self-developing and Healing System's Codes of Ethics.” It has points under subtitles like the aim of the codes of ethics, basic rules of the usage of Prananadi techniques, general rules of requirements from practitioners, and other rules about the relation to the patient-practitioner.

Prananadi studies are strictly secret, except for the basic, starting level, which can be learned by anyone. The leader's website has some basic information of the



course, the code of ethics, list of masters, course dates, and some of his personal stories how he has found this healing method. Within Prananaadi practitioners, they can only talk about their level of Prananaadi studies if the other has reached the same level. This secrecy is also a unique character, which I will talk about a little later.

A fine description of the structure of Prananaadi studies was given from one of my interviewee a 30 years old male:

“Prananaadi has a modular education system. There are modules from 1 - 5. There are also modules (courses) which you can only attend if you have already completed another course. E.g. Prananaadi reincarnation traveling course level 2. .you can only go to, if you have completed the Prananaadi level 1.course, or at Prananaadi massage course you can only take after you finished the first level in the basic Prananaadi course. There are also the courses which are related to the practical part of the Prananaadi courses, it has a kind of repeating role but also another one, which I cannot talk about. There are courses which are mandatory (e.g. the basic Prananaadi courses, which build on each other) and which you can choose yourself, like the course to become a Prananaadi teacher, or the practical courses, the Nepal journey, Pn.Hemi-Sync, Pn-massage, Pn-meditation; these are not mandatory but suggested to be completed if you want to be on a seriously high level.”

There are many aspects of Prananaadi attitude which are unlike mainstream Western cultures nowadays. Prananaadi practitioners believe in karma and reincarnation. Their basic beliefs are that people are different, the way people live their lives determines their future, not necessarily in this life, but in future lives. They think for the soul the human body is very valuable as maybe in your next life you will be a tree, or an animal. They believe that only the human life gives you the possibility to change some aspects of your life tendencies, from the many lives you have. There are some rules of how can you bring bad karma into your life – for

example by cheating on a spouse, or getting involved with married people. These will be very difficult to get rid of and you will have to work very hard to be able to reverse the bad karma. Additionally, if someone uses a symbol unethically in relation to their ethical system, that person might be punished in some ways which could result in mental or physical pain.<sup>28</sup> Also; nothing happens to people that they have not done before. If someone has a very difficult life it is because he earned it by bad behavior in previous lives, by possibly causing the same harm to others. Even though this kind of belief system, reincarnation and karma is not part of the mainstream Hungarian culture, they are common in Asian cultures and also within the migrated knowledge, schools, religions and organization with their Asian origin, one can find them in Western cultures, or in other words they are common within the alternative Western subcultures.<sup>29</sup>

There are some rare rituals like the initiation rituals, through which someone reaches a higher level after a course. Also, it is important to say that anyone can stop anytime at any level what they are doing. There are many esoteric books talking about a similar attitude for being in the world. E. g. Redclife or Coelho, whose books were read by many Prananadi practitioners. Despite of the fact that, there is no mandatory literature for Prananadi students, practitioners, if a practitioner

---

<sup>28</sup> As said earlier, Prananadi people in every course have to swear not to talk to outsiders about secretive Prananadi knowledge.

<sup>29</sup> In addition to that Western cultures have a history believing in reincarnation, e.g. alchemists. One great example is the 'The drink which makes you live forever', which is actually a subtitle of Maria Szepes's book, The Red Lion. It was written in the II. World war got forbidden and burned, except 4 copies. 40 years later it became published and popular worldwide. Szepes Maria's (1908-2007) book seemed to be a basic literature, one could say among Prananadi practitioners, as every single person I talked to knew about it. Szepes was also a scriptwriter and some people wrote about her as someone who worked in the field of Hermetic philosophy

reaches the 3<sup>rd</sup> the master level, by then it is exceptional for one not to read esoteric books, which are also part of the subjects of Prananadi socializing.

## CHAPTER 3. INTERACTION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, BODILY PRACTICES, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION & OTHER COMPONENTS

### *3.1. Interaction of the organizational structure, bodily practices and knowledge production*

#### 3.1.1 Related literature

Today, when Buddhism and alternative healing techniques, among them Prananadi, increasingly spread in the West, there are more and more scholars focusing on Merleau-Ponty's work and phenomenologist perspectives which keep appearing in their work as said to be above Buddhist consciousness is actually a phenomenological approach.

Mead's thought that "unless collectivities met with challenges, distinctive elements of group structure were unlikely to occur." (Denzin, 1969:925) In relation to Prananadi organization it is relevant, as practitioners despite the fact they have different location, and class, gender, education background etc.; they constitute a collective group.

According to interactionists, there is also a relevant information relating the self, which according to them is not only an object for a researcher but also a process, of shifting meaning of the self. As Denzin says "At certain times the self ceases to be a negotiated object, assumes an agreed upon meaning, and interaction, then turns to other concerns", which can be seen in ritual encounters, where the basic activity lies

above the self. This is also related to Prananadi practitioners, as when they are in a Prananadi course, they not only there as an individual, but as part of the collectivity, in a way which is more stressed in the practices, than it is in everyday life.

The importance of situation, seen as an intrusive variable by Denzin (p. 926), where it is impossible to separate the places as being interactions and objects of negotiation, and the importance of time, is also very relevant in relation to changes within Prananadi healing culture: Despite of the healing method itself does not change by time, it is interesting to see how the organizational structure does. The global center of Prananadi used to be in first Tibet, then Nepal, as I quoted earlier from Botond, it might be the case that today the center is in Hungary. This is many practitioners' opinion; they heard it from their masters, though I have only heard it indirectly, also, the structures of the courses are changing, there are more and different types of courses and the given time between the courses has been reduced. For example between the basic level 2 and 3 one used to have to wait for a longer time than today.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) social structures and individual consciousness are interlinked, not separate. Because both society and individual is important for sociology, the relations between the 2 aspects are dialectical, not one-directional or causal. There are 3 stages/moments of this dialectic, to which 3 processes allocated each. E.g. Man is a social product, and related processes are internalization, socialization, taken for granted symmetry. There are inevitable tendencies strengthening existing social patterns, by one such processes is

legitimation. It is described as process of the creation of ideas and explanations, which explain and justify the existing state of affair; and connected to the distribution of ideas, control of ideas, access to power and force. (Every organization relies on people who follow them, but some also to not questioning them.) According to Berger and Luckmann humans are creator of society, and then they internalize it through socialization. On the individual continuum describes by them with an end of individuals conform completely ideas, values of others, and on the other end individuals who do not belong anywhere. If one relates it to Pranandi hierarchical social structure, it can be seen that the organizational structure has bigger emphasize with this interaction in this respect, as people who do not follow the rules, will not be able to do the related bodily practices, therefore gaining knowledge, which sooner or later will be followed to become an outsider. (arasite wp)

### 3.1.2. Interaction of the three analytical units

There is a two-way interaction between these three analytical units: the hierarchical organizational structure determines both bodily practices (e.g. by keeping some people together to do the bodily practices, while separating others, which then in turn re-strengthen the organizational structure itself) and knowledge production (e.g. for the same reason). Bodily practices determines knowledge production (e.g. if someone does not practice they cannot gain Pranandi knowledge), and organizational structure (e.g. people with different levels of knowledge are in a different level within the organization). Pranandi knowledge production has an

effect on the organizational structure because of Pranadi secrets. Knowledge gained on different levels are re-strengthening the organizational structure. Knowledge production determines bodily practices as well because different kinds and level of knowledge leads to a different level or type of bodily practices by which one gains another levels and or types of knowledge production.

It is important to note that Pranadi practitioners value those who not only just follow the courses but practice continuously. One can do the courses without serious amount of practices but as soon as the practical aspect of Pranadi knowledge has to be shown it is obvious out within seconds if someone has had little or no practice at all. As much as I could see, practitioners do not want to practice with fellow Pranadi students if they don't see the willingness or eagerness to learn. Therefore that person will not only be unable to participate in Pranadi practices but will fall out from within the socializing circle as well.

The hierarchical organizational structure is so strong in Pranadi that it determines the way the production of knowledge can be created and the kind of bodily experiences one can have. If a person is within the Pranadi organization it cannot happen he does not know what level of knowledge can be gained because a type of knowledge one can gain has a certain place within the organization. It is important to know that one can only move higher up within the organizational structure if one has gained a certain amount and type of knowledge by their bodily experiences.

The organizational structure can be described like a triangle, where many can be on the lowest level, but only a few can reach to the top. In Hungary Pranadi practices

only exist for less than two decades. To reach the top people usually need more than twenty years. There can be seen many individual differences, but the amount of practices and the quality of bodily experiences one needs to gain takes time. In this respect Pranadi practices are similar to Buddhism as the amount of time used for bodily practices does not necessarily lead to knowledge production or bodily experiences. This also forces patients through meditations which leads to self-crescendo. One can practice hard and spend a lot of time doing it where Pranadi knowledge is only gained up to a level or point quickly. Stagnation in bodily experiences is very common because them and knowledge production are very complex and contain experiences not only on the conscious levels. It can happen that one gains a wealth of knowledge quickly by doing all the courses possible, but by doing so, certain bodily experiences will be missed out on, and without them one cannot gain a higher level of position within the organizational structure.

Within the Pranadi organization these three constitutive elements have a relationship which shows inter-dependency and creates a kind of reverberation circle which constantly reinforces itself. One cannot maintain a higher level within the organization with a high degree of Pranadi knowledge and have a lesser level of bodily experiences than others on the same elevation. The position in relation to each variable must form alike. I believe that borders between different levels are tougher on higher levels than on the lower ones.

It seems that there is an inner force, which 'pushes' the individual to gain more knowledge, to get more bodily experience, and to reach a higher level within the organization. As Botond relate to it:



“Knowledge is important, you cannot deliver quality without the courses which build on each other, but also you need to bodily knowledge which you get by practices. The higher level you reach the more you will be capable of to heal others, and to reach self- development.”

An outsider can say that humans are the same in that they always tend to be more motivated to reach a higher level. Still, it is a theory and in practice people reach a point where they alter from the theoretical norm. In relation to Prananadi this altering point is for most people on higher levels but somehow the organization creates this effect. Possibly because the organizational structure is so rigid that someone is either out or in. If in, then the development has no ends and experiences cannot always be measured by an outsider's scale. At this point Nader's fight for appreciation of the 'non-scientific' and the problem with scientific experiences come to one's mind. Prananadi practices are related to bodily experiences, which are sometimes difficult to express with words and the only way another person can understand it is if they have had previous experience of it. If this is indeed the case then language is not that necessary to communicate. To translate it for an outsider, I think physical and emotional pain is a good example, and the uniqueness of the experience can unite people. This goes back to phenomenology, embodied bodily experience and bodily memory. The way these experiences unite people leads to the constitutive element of organizational structure.

## 3.2. Other relevant aspects effective on Prananadi practices

I have collected many other components which can play a vital role in constitutive bodily experiences as well as knowledge production and can start to ignite the fire for the inner forces to sustain the above mentioned reverberation circle.

### 3.2.1. Secrecy

The most obvious component and the one which distinguishes Prananadi healing techniques from other medical practices is that of Secrecy. This behavior creates more borders between the Prananadi organization and the outside world, just like it does within the organization itself. It makes every aspect of the Prananadi lifestyle more complex and it works backwards as well. The organizational structure reflects the limited and institutionalized knowledge which can only be accessed by fewer practitioners.

Reticence about Prananadi practices can be related to Simmel's study on secrecy (1906). Simmel's thoughts on reticence by the Gallic druids reminded me of the Prananadi practitioners. The content of the Gallic druids' secret was mainly in their spiritual songs which had to be memorized. Writing the songs down was prohibited, therefore an inordinate period was necessary to learn them, in some cases twenty years. In this long duration of pupilage they learn gradual reticence. The regulation of songs should not be written down, 'had much more through sociological relations'. It was more than protecting the secret...this attached the individual member with a unique intimacy to the community." (p. 475) Additionally,

Simmel said that "...if these initiates were merely a total of personalities not interdependent, the secret would soon be lost". Simmel highlights socialization is an important factor in keeping up the secret. In relation to Prananadi practitioners, it could be related to Asch's conformism, as every practitioner keeps the secrets of their socializing get-togethers and when they meet they know that about one another, however if one doesn't, then that person will have to be punished, as practitioners have to swear every time when completing a course not to tell secretive elements to outsiders or to practitioners who are on a lower Prananadi level. Unlike many other secret societies, Prananadi does not want to be a ruler of society. They always highlight their level within medicine accordingly to the Hungarian law, that they only complement that of classical medicine adding to it that if someone comes for help they have to do their best whether the patient has been to a classical doctor beforehand. However, Prananadi Practitioners do advice patients to go to classical doctors if they think it is necessary, which is the case with any serious illnesses. This is how they learnt it, therefore being mandatory; it is also on the Codes of Ethic pages of the official Prananadi website, where it is clearly defined as mandatory. Additionally, in Simmel's study of secrecy (p. 478) he highlights the refinement and systematization with which secret societies that particularly work out their division of labor and the grading of their members. This goes along with another trait: "their energetic consciousness of their life". This life demonstrates the more instinctive forces and an incessantly regulating will for growth for within and constructive purposefulness which itself cannot be expressed more distinctly than in "their carefully considered and clear-cut architecture". The latter meant structure of the society. I would say that within the Prananadi practices there is a very strict

baseline, about the grading of member, labors and what is allowed. Additionally, Simmel argues the role of rituals in secret societies (p.480), which is also highly relevant in Prananadi practices, as special Prananadi rituals and are common in the organization. There are many rituals, rules and regulations, which are all clear, so practitioners can easily adapt to them.

To summarize, what is relevant from Simmel's work is that secrecy creates a stronger bond between the 'insiders', it is usually related to rigidly structured society, and which usually comes with a certain division of labor, rituals, rules and regulations. What makes the Prananadi organization different is that it shows many characteristics of a secret society but it is not that much of a closed system, not wanting to be a ruling power. Anyone can leave the organization at any time, at any level, and at any location, and this action has no consequences.

So why is secrecy within the Prananadi organization? Agi's answer is the following:

"Well, Nadi puts lots of emphasis on experiences that you have to experience things on yourself. Also, there are, for ordinary people, unbelievable things, which can only be experienced and understood by this; otherwise it would not be credible."

A type of answer I obtained is that people are not always ready to receive certain types of information and if one is exposed to it, it could harm them. This explanation is in relation to symbols, particularly the 'I cannot remember' slogan within Prananadi with a meaning of "I am not allowed to talk about it". I have heard it many times before, which leads on to another possible direction: The Zeigarnik Effect, which refers to the inner tension created by one leaving something half-finished. This inner

tension makes the individual wanting to go back and finish that particular task.<sup>30</sup> Within Prananadi practices, secrecy can create this tension of wanting to find out, which can lead to wanting to stay in the organization, to reach a level where it is possible to find something out.

### 3.2.2. Financial aspects

There are other aspects, of one's life, which can make people to be more attached to a certain organization or person, and these are relevant in relation to Prananadi organization. In relation to *finances*, among Prananadi people it is only ethical to heal people without any expectation. They can never sell healing for money.<sup>31</sup> It is only acceptable to accept money from a patient if the patient gives it, because it is important to them - for example, if they would feel bad about not being able to give back. Prananadi people are not allowed to ask money for it. In our everyday life, it is a very different type of giving and getting, to cure and to heal. Prananadi-trade, by excluding money which is the main part in the capitalist world, seems to be similar to tribal trades like the Kula in Malinowski's research in the way that it is more based on trust and giving than money. However, in the Kula there were rules about how to give back, which is missing between the Prananadi practitioners and their patients. At the same time, Malinowski-style psychological functionalism gives a good frame to this aspect of Prananadi behavior: by giving to the patient it causes good

---

<sup>30</sup> Bluma Zeigarnik, (Russian Gestaltist) found that people have a better memory of an unfinished task than the finished task.

<sup>31</sup> As I said it earlier, I have experienced that one can see the opposite in practice at some practitioners, but it seems to be rare. As both A. and B. interviewees said "It should not be happening at all. Go to a different practitioners"

karma. Human-beings also have this psychological pattern that if they receive, even if not immediately, they start giving. It is actually a usual trend to receive something from patient, if not money then little presents or help. It has been known, like in every society, there could be 'black sheep' among them. Some people who studied Prananadi have subsequently tried to make business out of it. Therefore, from 2007 in Hungary the name Prananadi is protected by law. There are people who say bad things about Prananadi practices, even creating websites on it (dharmaling.org). These claim that Prananadi is a cult and the system was created simply to extract money from people by telling them how valuable they are after a two-day course. Lately, I have a bit more information about this relation, also there has been some developments as well, which I believe are related. It is important to note, that today there are many more courses than there were two years ago, I believe the Prananadi organization has expanded a lot; still all these courses cost money, and many people are doing it. The new mobile-fleet service and the new diverse type of courses are giving more and more a picture of a capitalist society rather, than the earlier mentioned Malinowski-styled Kula trade. There seem to be a stronger diversion between healing and learning courses. This organization as expands is getting more and more complex. From these it might seem that courses are quite expensive, but compare to what? Botond's and Agi's about their relation to the financial aspects of Prananadi are the followings:

"I don't care about money, therefore I am not interested in the relation between Prananadi and its financial aspects. As long as I can pay for my courses, I am good. Sometimes money is really necessary, like education traveling, for the Hungarian leader to go to Nepal, to learn more is essential or big enough houses for the courses, all these needs money. Or Hemi-sync is a legally protected product, for the person

who created it, one must pay. Or the Cd-makings. There was a course I went to (mandatory) it cost 17 thousand, but we got 6 cd-s, I figured we got 6 cd-s and a course for that price.” –Botond.

“In the East it is common that people give something back if someone did a healing, magic or blessing etc. for them. Even the poorest people do it, because this is their social norm. Here it is totally different. We, Western people don’t like to give, even the well-off do not open their purses only if it is a must. Therefore, if someone has been treated by a healer, who does not ask for something in return, then the person won’t give, because it was free, and that’s it. The courses are also benefaction, they should also get something in return for giving courses, and it is fine. But! What is not right, that Prananadi practitioners, masters ask for money after the courses independently from one’s financial or social status and they possibly ask for something in return from (seriously) ill patients. Maybe it is only a sensitive point for me, because I could hardly pay 30 thousand for my level 3. Course but I met more people, who had high positions, for whom even twice as much can be paid with an ease, without need for savings. Anyway, it is not great that they don’t determine costs individually.” - Agi.

### 3.2.3. Symbols and Rituals

From an anthropological point of view, *symbols and rituals* can create a sense of togetherness. Practitioners have rituals, which give them a frame for togetherness a kind of group-identity within a society and therefore a sense of belonging, which could be very beneficial within the ‘forever changing’ structured Hungarian society. Decorations of Prananadi masters’ places mirror the Prananadi-school/monastery in Nepal, which can be seen in different Buddhist symbols. There are images, and sculptures of Buddha, pray flags, flag of Tibet, the walls are decorated with many images of the Buddhist philosophy. Prananadi is not a Buddhist organization, but use some elements from Buddhism, as the Prananadi healing technique was kept for a long time in Tibet, therefore Buddhism pervade Prananadi-practices. The relation with Tibet can also be seen in usage of incense, Tibetan music, Tibetan mantras,

these are all usual accessorizes of the Pranadi courses and practices. The Pranadi social network is very strong. As a ritual, there is a special Pranadi hug, which is done by right arm up on the shoulders of the other person, and the left arm is by the waist-level on the other person. As a result, when they hug each other their heart-chakra can 'touch' each other. Other similar rituals, is thanking someone with hands together in front of the heart-chakra (there are many photos in the media of the Dalai Lama doing it) and bending forwards slightly.

*Personally, I have never liked rules; so I started to question rules in the Pranadi society immediately. The first rule I came across with and did not like was the 3 weeks diet with no alcohol, cigarettes, meat after the level 1. course. I have managed to keep it for 2 weeks; it did not seem that it had any consequences. In my 2 years of Pranadi practices I have managed to leave out as many rules as possible, without any further consequences. The biggest was that I changed master, some masters do not even allow it to their students, unless they have special request from the national leader. With small rules, it seemed it did not matter if one broke them, some teachers take them seriously, and some don't. As usage of symbols was not mandatory, some of us have more than others. However, rituals while completing courses were kept by everyone.*

#### **3.2.4. Other components**

Another possible component which can have a social effect is the initiation, which is part of every mandatory course. There is a room, where no one is allowed to go only the master, accepts when there is an initiation. The master gets into the room to do



preparations, and dress into his initiation clothes (red gown, very similar to what the Dalai Lama wears usually in the media). This is the only time Prananadi masters use a dress code. Botond's summary of the initiation:

“It is about making your body capable of doing certain things. Buddha said you need body, talk and consciousness. Initiation is authorization. You need it in order to be able to heal through your hands. It is also a rendition of knowledge.”

Also another aspect is the hard work what is required by body practices, or for example after completing the level 1 course, the 3 weeks harsh diet, with a daily 1.5hours of self-treatment daily; can refer to a known phrase: ‘the harder one needs to work on something, the more that person will appreciate the thing’ and it can create bigger coherence in a group. (Sherif, 1954)

Prananadi is spiritual, professional and social, and it is not a religion. In this chapter I showed how the 3 analytical unit organizational structure, knowledge production and bodily practices interact with each other, by looking at them from different aspects and related them to relevant literatures. Also, I showed other components which I have found effective on the Prananadi healing culture in contemporary Hungary.

## CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

According to my analysis of the three constitutive elements of organizational structure, knowledge production and bodily practices, I emphasize the interdependence in the interaction of these elements. They combine with each other in Prananadi which is a Tibetan healing culture in contemporary Hungary. It is strongly related to secrecy, which mostly distinguishes Prananadi from other non-conventional healing techniques.

To relate the details of how these analytical units create a type of uniqueness, I highlight the most conspicuous distinctiveness of the three analytical units. The uniqueness of social structure, which is hierarchical and which I have found to be rigid, is not a closed system, led by an authoritarian figure, but it has a leader, who is on top of the hierarchy. Prananadi is an open system: anyone can enter it, and leave it anytime, or one can leave it for days or decades and will be welcomed back with open arms. My emphasis is on the knowledge production where one can heal and also to learn to be a healer and a teacher in its all-in-one learning system this is unlike other non-classical medicines. And last, but not least, I find that bodily practices are related to an ancient healing culture which based its healing system on its relation to symbols.

By combining these three elements, it is not surprising that one achieves a heightened and powerful healing culture. As this is the first paper to be conducted into Prananadi practices, it would be good if further research on this subject could be done, but with more disciplinary tools. I have found some gaps in the literature in relation to

the Prananadi healing culture.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Buda, L., Lampek, K., Tahin, T. (2006) Demographic background and Health status of Users of Alternative Medicine: A Hungarian example. In Lazar, I. & Johannessen H. ed.: Multiple Medical Realities. Patients and Healers in Biomedical, Alternative and Traditional Medicine. 21-35.

Csordas, Thomas. (1994) Words from the Holy People: a case study in cultural phenomenology. In ed. Csordas: *Embodiment and Experience, The existential ground of culture and self*. Cambridge University Press. 269-291.

Denzin, K. (1969) Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology: A proposed Synthesis. *American Sociological Review*, Vol.34 (6): 922-934.

Ernst & Singh (2008) Trick or Treatment: Alternative Medicine on Trial. Bantam Press.

Feld, S. & Basso, K. (1996) *Introduction*. In. Senses of Place. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press. 3-12.

Freiler, Tammy J. (2008) Learning through the body. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. Issue 119: 37 – 47.

Fujimura, H. Joan, (1998) Authorizing Knowledge in Science and Anthropology. *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. **100**, (2): 347-360.

Giddens, A. (2006) Health, illness and disability. In *Sociology*. Polity Press. Cambridge. 203-233.

Gieryn, T. F. (1983) Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48. (6): 781-795

Hunter J. P. & Katz' J. & Karen D. (2003) The effect of tactile and visual sensory inputs on phantom limb awareness. *Brain, Journal of Neurology*. Vol. 126: **(3)**:579-589. (phantom limb effect)

Kovach, Judith (2002) The Body as the Ground of Religion, Science, and Self. *Zygon*. Volume 37 (4): 941-961.

Loizzo, J. & Charlson, M., and Peterson, J. (2009) A Program in Contemplative Self-Healing Stress, Allostasis, and Learning in the Indo-Tibetan Tradition. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. Volume 1172 (0): 123-147.

Loss, Joseph (2010) Universal Experiences in Israel: On Local Modes of Adoption of the Global Path of the Buddha Phd Abstract. Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Loss, Joseph (2010) Buddha-Dhamma in Israel Explicit Non-Religious and Implicit. Non-Secular Localization of Religion. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Volume 13, Issue 4:84–105.

Latour B, (1996) "On interobjectivity" *Mind, Culture and Activity* 3 228 – 245. see in Brown, Steven, & Middleton, David (2005) The baby as virtual object: agency and difference in a neonatal intensive care unit. *Environment and Planning : Society and Space* volume 23: 695 – 715. pp707.

Lyon, M. & Barbalet, J. (1994) *Society's body: Emotion and the 'somatization' of social theory*. In Csordas, T. Ed.: Embodiment and experience. The existential ground of culture and self. 48-69.

Malinowski, Bronislaw (2004) The essentials of the Kula. In: McGee, John and

Warms, Richard (ed). *Anthropological theory: An introduction to history*. N.Y. pp. 157-172.

Milgram, Stanley (1963). "Behavioral Study of Obedience". *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67: 371–378.

Nader, Laura (1996) *Naked Science, Anthropological inquiry into boundaries, power and knowledge*. Routledge.

Nakata, M. (2002) Indigenous knowledge and the Cultural Interface: underlying issues at the intersection of knowledge and information systems. *IFLA Journal* (5/6):281-287.

Pagis, Michael. (2008) Embodied Self-Reflexivity: When the Body Becomes an Anchor

for Selfhood. University of Chicago.

Sherif, M. (1954) Integrating Field Work and Laboratory in Small Group Research.

*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 19. (6): 759-771

Simmel G.(1906) The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies . *The American*

*Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 11, (4): 441-498

Szepes, M. (1949) *The Red Lion. The drink that makes you live forever*. Edesviz Kiado.

## WEBPAGES:

Abi Kusow webpage: <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/kusow/Stigma.pdf>

Symbolic anthropology . <http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/symbolic.htm>

Peter J. Leithart on Latour (2006): <http://www.leithart.com/archives/002528.php>

Hungarian legal background:

[Hungarian Law in Helathcare http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=99700154.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=99700154.TV)  
<http://www.lelekbenotthon.hu/modules.php?file=article&name=News&sid=223>

Official Prananadi Website: <http://www.prananadi.hu/>

Prananadi Foundation's website: <http://prananadi17.hu/szervfel3.php>

Critics for Critics for Prananadi

Critics for Prananadi:

<http://www.dharmaling.org/forums/index.php?s=d5f29df16772e3814cd0d6f4c97d1f98&showtopic=1274&pid=6906&st=0&#entry6906>

The young Prananadi master's website: <http://prananadi.eu/main.php>

Reading Guide to Berger P and Luckmann T (1966) The Social Construction of Reality: a treatise on the sociology of knowledge, London: Penguin University Books  
<http://www.arasite.org/bandl.htm>

On Foucault's Biopower <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biopower>

On Maurice Merleau-Ponty Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/merleau>