



B a b a j i ' s

Kriya Yoga Journal

An Adventure in Consciousness in the Himalayas

By M.G. Satchidananda

The Himalayan mountains have been the destination for spiritual adventurers for many thousands of years. This past September twenty-one Kriya Yoga sadhaks from seven countries participated in a pilgrimage to Badrinath. I am happy to share with our readers some glimpses of it, in words and in the photographs at this link. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/m728G3FP1raSeCCD8>

After arriving in New Delhi,

and getting a short connecting flight to Dehradun, the capital of the state of Uttarkhand, our pilgrimage began in nearby Rishikesh. The Ganges River flows through Rishikesh, at the place where it first emerges from the foothills of the Himalayas. It takes its name from the fact that for thousands of years, sages (rishis) and yogis consecrated it with their spiritual practices. It contains more than ninety ashrams. Many of them are in

the forest or on the banks of the northern side of the Ganges River, accessible only by footbridges.

In recent years, as India has enjoyed some of the highest economic growth rates in the world, and new highways have been built between it and New Delhi, many affluent Indians have also made it a choice destination for tourism. Modern hotels and good restaurants in Rishikesh are especially convenient now, in comparison to what was available during my first visit here nearly 40 years ago. So, I was happy to introduce our pilgrimage groups to Rishikesh by residing for our first three nights in the beautiful Divine Resort Hotel, situated on the Ganges, in the area known as Tapovan. After traveling halfway around the world, I wanted everyone to enjoy their comfortable rooms and excellent meals, and to have a great "Yoga Room" where we could

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practice our Kriya Yoga as a group in the early morning and evenings.

Our yogic sadhana turned us inwards, fulfilling the purpose of a pilgrimage.

Unlike tourists, pilgrims are not looking for new experiences *out there*; they are not seeking diversion, entertainment, or amusement. On a pilgrimage, we seek to know the truth of our Self, the Divine, the ineffable, beyond names and forms. Unlike tourism, a pilgrimage requires one to turn inwards towards the absolute, that which does not change, and to let go of both the past and present distractions, cultivating equanimity.

To realize this purpose, every day of our 17-day pilgrimage, our group practiced Kriya Yoga sadhana together several times a day.

From 6:30 am to 8:30 am: mantras, a guided meditation on kundalini transformation, while practicing the bandhas, followed by Brahmacharya Ojas Matreika and Kriya Kundalini pranayamas, followed by the dhyana meditation kriyas.

From 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm: the practice of Kriya Hatha Yoga; several persons who have attended our teacher training program lead some of these sessions.

From 5:15 to 6:30 pm: Kriya Kundalini Pranayama and Dhyana.

From 7:30 to 8:30 pm: a lecture on the wisdom teachings of Babaji, Patanjali and other Siddhas, followed by kirtan, which were led by Narada and Paulo from Brazil, and Jean Francois Matte from Quebec with their guitars or harmoniums.

A visit to three saints

The day after our arrival in Rishikesh, we visited three saints. First, Swami Sankarananda, a Kriya Yogi, in the lineage of Sri Yukteswar, and Swami Hariharananda, at his ashram in Tapovan a short walk from our hotel. We were blessed to hear him give a short talk and to meditate in the hall which he had built to coincide with the 12

“houses” of Vedic astrology. Next, we visited the ashram founded by the late Swami Sivananda in the early 1930's. We were blessed to have The President of the Divine Life Society, H.H. Sri Swami Yogaswarupanandaji Maharaj, meet and give to us 30 minutes talk Yoga. Later, we crossed the Ganges by walking over a new footbridge, known as Janki Setu, and visited Swami Sankardas, chief disciple of Tatwalla Baba, in Parmath Niketan. He has been my friend for more than 20 years. Although he was having fever, he graciously met with us.

The second day, we travelled in three small buses an hour north of Rishikesh to visit the cave of the yogi Vaisistha, who is one of the oldest and most revered Vedic rishis or sages, and one of the Saptarishis. Vaisistha is credited as the chief author of Mandala 7 of the Rigveda. Vashishtha and his family are mentioned in Rigvedic verse 10.167.4, other Rigvedic mandalas and in many Vedic. Our group meditated in this cave and then bathed in the Ganges nearby.

The following day we travelled on our three buses for 7 hours to Rudrapur, where we stayed at the Monal Resort Hotel. In the evening we meditated at the point where two tributaries of the Ganges, the Mandakini, originating in the glacier at Kedarnath meets the Alakanada river, which originates from the glacier in Badrinath. Such a point, where rivers meet, is known as a “sangams”, and are sacred sites of pilgrimage.

The next day we travelled for 7.5 hours to Badrinath, stopping in Joshimutt for lunch and to visit the cave where Adi Shankaracharya, the great 9th century reformer of Hinduism, meditated and wrote some of his most important works. During my first visit to it in 1986 with Yogi Ramaiah, I had the best Arupa Dhyana kriya meditation there in my life. It is situated below a 4,000 + year old sacred pipal tree, and one of the four mutts or monasteries founded by this great sage. We continued our journey in the afternoon, planning to arrive in Badrinath well before sundown, so that we could unload our baggage and with the help of porters travel the last mile on foot up a

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steep hill to Babaji's Kriya Yoga Ashram. As our buses began our descent in the last narrow lane towards the footbridge where we planned to meet the porters and unload, we came across a large truck which had broken down and blocked the road. How to continue? Fortunately, we somehow managed, through Babaji's grace to get everyone and our baggage to the ashram before nightfall. After evening sadhana, we enjoyed a meal which was delivered by the local Saket Restaurant.

The next day, after our morning sadhana and a breakfast delivered by the Saket Restaurant, we visited as a group the small town of Badrinath, crossing another footbridge in front of the temple dedicated to Sri Badrinarayan, the local name for Vishnu, and reestablished by Adi Shankaracharya in the 9th century. My attempts to lead the group through its streets were repeatedly confronted with barriers erected near the end of many of them, due to infrastructure construction, forcing us to retrace our steps. It was like herding 21 cats!

The next morning, we visited the temple of Sri Badrinarayan, participating in the puja there among hundreds of devotees. It is the destination for hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year, being one of the four most sacred pilgrimage sites in the Himalayas, known collectively as the *Char Dham*. In the afternoon we had a mantra yagna in the ashram's sacred fire shrine, or *peetam*.

The following day, our group visited Mana, five kilometers north of Badrinath. It is the site of the Vyasa Gufa, the cave where, many thousands of years ago, the sage Vyasa wrote the *Mahabharata*, the epic text which contains one of Yoga's fundamental texts, the *Bhagavad Gita*. While there, I gave spiritual names, Santoshi and Deva to Celine Cote and Daniel Dickey, two dedicated sadhaks from Quebec. Following this we descended to the confluence of the Saraswati and Alakananda rivers where we had a mantra yagna for two hours.

In the following day, a local priest, or pandit, conducted a special fire yagna at the ashram, singing hymns to Ganesha, Narayana (Vishnu) from the *Atharavaveda*. During it, he asked each participant to form a *sankalps*, or intention to change something in themselves or in their lives.

Subsequently, during the two-hour ceremony, he asked everyone to repeat it. It reminded me of my training in yogic *tapas*, which always begins with a *sankalpa*, dedication to an intention for a positive change in one's life or behavior.

The next day we returned to Mana, the starting point for the five-kilometer climb up to Vasudhara Falls, which has a vertical drop of more than 200 feet.



During our last two days in Badrinath, there was free time. I and many others made a four hour long climb to the glacier at the base of Mount Neelakantan, which is directly behind our ashram, and about 1500 meters higher, at an altitude of 4,500 meters (14,763 feet). It is the site of many caves where yogis to this day sit in tapas, intensive practice.

The Master plan.

The small town of Badrinath was a construction zone during this pilgrimage. The Central and the Uttarkhand State governments are implementing an urban "master plan" with new infrastructure to promote and facilitate both tourism and pilgrimage. These involve reconstruction of

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the bathing ghats and walkways along the sides of the Alakananda River, and the tearing down of buildings around the temple to make way for new facilities for the pilgrims. The homes of hundreds of priests are being demolished. While it is difficult to envisage how it will all appear once it is completed, these efforts have already widened the road between Joshimutt and Badrinath, particularly in the place where landslides have often blocked our road on in previous pilgrimages. As recently as 2019, our pilgrimage group had to get leave their buses and baggage and hike over a mountain for a few hours to bypass the landslide and meet buses and jeeps on the other side! On June 25, 2013, during a tsunami like rainstorm, 4.5 kilometers of this road disappeared, stranding 12,000 pilgrims for two weeks!

So, I am very grateful that the risk that this vital road will again be closed has been removed. On the other hand, the number of visitors and hotels has increased tremendously. Fortunately, the hotels are all on the other side of the Alakananda River across from our ashram. The “master plan” will not allow any roads or hotels or automobiles to be on our side of the river, so it remains pristine.

Synchronicity

Organizing these pilgrimages requires a tremendous amount of effort. So, I am always grateful when there is unexpected assistance. This time there was synchronicity when my need to find a priest to conduct the sacred fire ceremony in the ashram was fulfilled. On the second day in Badrinath, returning from our visit to the town, as I climbed up the steep path to the ashram, suddenly someone shouted behind me “Marshall Govindan, I remember how you conducted a mantra yagna all night here in 1998!” I turned around as saw a tall distinguished looking priest smiling at me from the steps of his small house. He introduced himself and mentioned that we had stayed in the hotel which he managed in that year. After reminiscing with him I asked him whether he would conduct a mantra yagna at our ashram in four days. He promised to find

someone to do it, as he was occupied with other commitments. Thousands of pilgrims come to Badrinath every year to conduct *pinda* ceremonies for the benefit of loved ones who have died. The priests maintain huge books recording many generations of each family’s ceremonies for this purpose.

A new manager for the Badrinath ashram

In early July of 2023, Mr. Satyanarayana Tal-la, began managing the Badrinath ashram. He is a retired civil servant, and former manager of the Ramanuja Dharmasala (pilgrims guest house) near the foot bridge over the river where our buses drop us. This followed eight years of effort to overcome bureaucratic restrictions pertaining to property by the State government, and finally a very difficult one-year period in which the previous manager refused to transfer title to ashram unless we met his exorbitant conditions. Through Babaji’s Grace, and the efforts of Mr. Vijay Ragha-va, a trustee of our Bangalore Trust, ownership of the ashram was finally transferred.

An adventure in consciousness

I have led pilgrimages to Badrinath more than fifteen times since 1985. In that year, Yogi Ramaiah asked me to go there and to make reservations for our lodging. Six months later and after we spent 48 days as the Mahakumbha Mela in Hardwar, he came with 40 persons, and we resided in the government’s “Tourist Bungalow.” There were no hotels in Badrinath then. We slept under blankets that had probably never been washed in very damp, dirty rooms. In subsequent pilgrimages, the hotels we stayed in got better, but without a space for group practice our sadhana. Each pilgrimage has presented different challenges for me to remain calmly active and actively calm. My mantra is “now, nothing can disturb me” and “this situation, and this emotion, will pass.” In this way, pilgrimages have become my yoga mat, and an adventure in consciousness. Each of them is also colored by the memories of previous ones. I am grateful to Babaji to have been able

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to share them with so many people from around the world. The spiritual experiences, peace, and ananda from simply being in Badrinath are beyond words and have lasting effects. Badrinath is soaked in the spiritual vibrations and experience of Babaji and thousands of yogis who for millennia have done Kriya Yoga tapas there. May all of our readers practice Babaji's Kriya Yoga intensively there one day!



The Maha Kumba Mela at Hardwar in 2010– Part I

By Durga Ahlund

(Notes in this article refer to links at the end of this article where related photos can be seen on our website's four photo galleries)

In the Light of the New Moon

The Maha Kumbh Mela is the largest religious and cultural gatherings in India today, set on the most auspicious astrological dates when millions of devotees gather to bathe in the sacred river Ganges, to receive the blessings of Goddess Ganga and to seek spiritual awakening, from spiritual gurus. It is also a symbol of social harmony in diversity.

The *Maha Kumbh Mela* in Haridwar occurs every twelve years in India. Smaller *kumbamelas* occur every four years, in rotation among the four following places: Haridwar, Ujjan, Nasik, and Allahabad, all situated at specific points along sacred rivers. This is a story of the 2010 Mela, in which Satchidananda and I and about 130 Kriya Yoga students participated. Satchidananda and I stayed for most of the Mela, to support several groups of students arriving at different times during the 48-day period.

We and the first group of students arrived in New Delhi, amidst preparations for the 60th Republic Day celebrations, which included major security anti-terror arrangements. Ground to air security was in place, snipers were employed along the route, anti-sabotage check points were set up and helicopters patrolled the sky. Delhi had been turned into a fortress. We were only spending the night of our flight arrival in Delhi and hoped to be able to get out early in the morning. We were hopeful that we could travel along the few open routes and avoid all the festivities and fireworks of the coming day. It was 3 a.m. and we prayed that all the students flying in from so many different countries had already or would soon make it to the Delhi hotel where we were meeting. It wasn't until 8 a.m. that morning at our hotel that we were able to confirm that everyone had made it. However, at the same time we were told that our buses would not make it to the hotel. They had been diverted for security reasons. So, instead, thirty-four of us took taxis to where the buses were stationed ten kilometers

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The Maha Kumbha Mela *continued*

outside the city limits. All went smoothly.

The Maha Kumbh Mela opened on January 14th, 2010, in Haridwar. It began quite auspiciously with a New Moon followed by a Solar eclipse. This combination is said to create the perfect alignment for meditation and for charity. No bathing was allowed prior to the end of the Eclipse at 3:35 on the 15th. Once the eclipse was over, the thousands of people in attendance were able to take a dip in the chilly waters of the Ganges and then dry off on the ghats, in the warm sunshine.

We arrived on the day that Jupiter was entering Aquarius, and so were able to witness, the *akhada* or order of Himalayan *naga babas*, a normally naked, extremely ascetic sect of renunciants begin their procession for their *snan* (holy bath) in the Holy Ganges. On auspicious dates the “babas” (an honorific title for spiritually advanced sadhus) are given privileged exclusive priority access to the Ganges. Before too long there would be a million people in attendance, but, at this early date, only the *naga babas* and ascetics of the *Juna*, *Dasnamai*, *Narajana akhadas* had arrived, and of course, us.



Our group stayed at a small hotel in the town, miles from the campgrounds. We awakened very early each morning, took time for a cup of sweet chai, before taking the long walk to our yoga camp. Those were delightful, early morning hours spent in Sadhana. Our camp was simple. It consisted of a rectangular tent, thirty feet wide by one hundred twenty feet long, with a floor of cotton carpeting, a sound system, and a mantra yagna fire pit outside at the rear. The energy of

the camp was peaceful and silent, even though there were constant trucks and tractors stirring and droning, constructing other, larger camps nearby. **(Photo gallery 1, photos 2,3,4, 11)**

That very first day, we were met at our tent by five *naga babas* of the *Juna akhada*. *Dattreya* another name for Siva, is their preferred image of worship and Jnana or wisdom is their goal. We were very fortunate that one of the younger babas was very attracted to Mahavatar Babaji and told us that he had been seeking him and his darshan since he was a young boy. He told us that he has read the book about Babaji by Marshall Govindan and wanted initiation into Kriya Yoga. His English was very good. He told me that he never received instruction in English but learnt it in his dreaming state when he was quite young. He was most definite about telling me this and seemed to want me to understand that this was true. I smile and tell him that he had an amazing grasp of English. We were introduced to his Gurudeva (personal teacher) and his Jnana Guru (wisdom teacher) and two other *gurubais* (brother disciples). He said in introduction, ‘this is my family!’ They were dressed in orange, ochre and browns, their long hair wrapped expertly on top of their heads. There was nothing particularly fierce or frightening about these five babas seated before us, but for their extraordinarily intense, piercing eyes. They were looking for devotees but were also just a bit curious about us. They ask us what we are looking for, and why we had come to the Kumbha Mela. They told us that the difference between them and us is that they know what they are seeking and are willing to do what it takes to find it! All the baba’s we met told us the same thing, that renunciation was absolutely required. We are invited to come to their monastery that night at 5 p.m. for darshan with the entire akhada. They also invited us to travel with them to the Himalayas if we are willing to accept a traditional guru-disciple relationship. Social dharma is what they speak about for the most part. They are anti-Hindu and anti-religion, even though their ashram or monastery has

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The Maha Kumba Mela *continued*

a large Temple to the Goddess in all her forms. Even *Chinnamasta* is there, Mother in her most fierce form.

We visited their monastery in the center of Haridwar that evening. The naga baba who had told me how he learned English again spoke to Satchidananda about his sincere aspiration to be initiated into Kriya Yoga. "But" he said, "I must first confess to you two things for which I am ashamed. *First, I am addicted to smoking ganja. It helps to numb my suffering. I have a master's degree in computer science, and I come from Kerala, but still I suffer because of the guilt I feel for having murdered someone six years ago. As penance for this crime, I decided to do what would be the most difficult thing I could possibly do, to endure the ascetism of a naga baba for the rest of my life. As the junior member of my group, I must also serve them by preparing and cooking their meals during our travels and where we spend most of our time, our akhada's monastery in Varanasi.*

The most interesting sadhu here carries his arm above his head and has done so for the past twenty-four years! His fingernails have not been cut or broken off during all these years, so they curl around his hand. I wonder how long they would be if you could stretch them out. I see him move his arm only about six inches toward and away from the top of his head. He never drops his arm. It seems particularly significant since I have a frozen shoulder and am unable to lift my right arm as high as he has been holding his for the past twenty-four years. I wonder if he is frozen in this position. I also wonder if he is the same sadhu who lives above Mana and below Satopanth Tal, with whom I was unable to speak during my pilgrimage there in 1999. I continued to look at him and he turned to me, with a smile in his eyes, as if answering my question. **(Photo gallery 3, photos 15-16)**

I led the asana to the glory of the next morning sun at our camp's tent and found, to my delight that I was able for the first time in a year, to lift my arm high above my head. It felt miraculous. Had the baba heard my plea and helped relax the muscular tension in my arm? Was it due to a

special healing energy-grace in the atmosphere here? **(Photo gallery 2, photo 43)**

The *naga babas*, to my surprise invited Satchidananda and me to accompany their Juna akhada's twelve-kilometer procession to the Ganges riverbank ghat (steps) for their bath on another auspicious date. Satchidananda agreed to participate, however I begged off, but was very grateful for their generous and inclusive invitation. No one knows the route of these processions in advance. We are told that last year some bad things occurred, although they would not elaborate. I had heard there can be fighting amongst the various akhadas for the priority position in the procession, but I did not pursue it. I was told the Guru will protect us all. The naga babas have always taken pride in their fighting spirit. During the centuries when Muslim armies invaded northern India, the Hindu kings and princes hired and armed them to defend their realms. On the walls of their monastery, ancient swords, spears and shields are mounted prominently.

The army announced the route in the very early hours of the morning. Their procession that day was led by two naked babas on horseback, holding huge spears. They were followed by thousands of naga babas, naked, except for garlands of orange marigold flowers. **(Photo gallery 2, photos 15,17,18, 19, 20, 37, 40)**

The weather was beginning to get warm. The nights and early morning hours remained cold, but by mid-morning with the rise of the sun, the temperatures reached pleasantly to the 70's. Larger numbers of people were beginning to arrive at the train and bus stations. In the mix were oche robes, matted hair, ashen chests covered with garlands of holy rudraksha beads. Everyone was very friendly, especially the women, who often wanted to chat. I was also pleased that motor vehicles in the town were being limited so that both noise and air pollution was much less.

The akhada procession was to begin during the morning hours, but even by mid-day there was no sign of the sadhus or Satchidananda. Huge crowds had gathered along the procession's route.

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The Maha Kumba Mela *continued*

After a few hours of patient waiting, we heard that the naga babas were about four kilometers from where we had stationed ourselves. We had a perfect rooftop, birds eye position.

A few of the kriya yoginis from Spain were unhappy that they were not allowed to march along with the naga babas today. I explain to them that there are no women in the akhadas present today and wonder why it matters to them so much that they are not part of the parade? I suggest that Kriya Yogis aren't interested in appearing holy, but instead choose to maintain an internal vision, which stays in communion with that most holy part of ourselves. And that maintaining an internal vision in the midst of this boisterous crowd was indeed an attainment. They seemed unimpressed.

The night before the parade, the moon was full, but it was this night when the moon was in a special alignment. It would be in its largest and brightest phase. This day has already been especially good for meditation and introspection. I look more to the evening meditation than the parade.



But there is great expectation in the air. We prepared for this day by bathing in the Ganges. I can finally see Satchidananda approaching. He had walked the twelve kilometers with the sadhus in his rubber flipflops. I hoped his weak knee had held out and the sun was not too strong. He was dressed in a white dhoti and white long sleeve t-shirt and looked the part. I had found an Ayurvedic doctor close to the hotel, and just in case, purchased a special balm for his knee.

The day-long wait for the procession did not

disappoint. Night had fallen before the procession reached us. The moon was shining so brightly that we could see the nearly thirty thousand Juna akhada babas walking among musical bands, and horse-driven chariots and elephants carrying those sadhus and gurus of the highest status. There were about a hundred naked naga babas and a few who were demonstrating a kind of martial art, a type of graceful stick fighting. The ascetic sage who carries his hand above his head so effortlessly was among the first to lead the parade. The most unusual event of the evening was the baba who displayed his strength by wrapping his penis around a long baton and shifting it behind him under his buttocks. His disciples would then stand on the stick. I was too far from him to really see what was going on. Satchidananda walking in the procession, saw it firsthand. More interesting to me, was the powerful and bright female saint, that I could see seated regally on a float. We planned to go see her at her camp. She speaks English and is very open to conversation. **(Photo gallery 1, photo 1)**

I had been rather unimpressed with the mela over the past few days. However, the arrival of the parade of babas intensified the energy in and around us. I could not tell where the energy was coming from. I was swept along with it and dropped into a deep, quiet space. It was extraordinary.

I was not able to sleep that night, the moon was so full, the energy so intense. I practiced mantra, meditated, and then just sat up the rest of the night. I did not try to sleep. The next day I was not tired at all. The energy in Haridwar had been charged with, or since, the procession. There is no doubt about that. I came to believe that sleep thereafter, while at the Mela, was not so very important. It was time to just go with the flow.

Experiencing the energy of the Guru far beyond Haridwar

The days were good days. After early morning sadhana, we would walk the camps and meet sadhus, but sometimes we left Haridwar for Ri-

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The Maha Kumba Mela *continued*

shikesh, which is about forty-five minutes by bus. Rishikesh was quieter and so lovely. The weather was perfect and the air sweet and free of pollution. We would visit on the weekdays when the crowds of the weekend were gone and only the locals were in the streets. We always visit Sivananda Ashram when we are in Rishikesh, but this time it felt different. The Samadhi Shrine (final resting place of the body of Swami Sivananda) was empty when we arrived, but within a few minutes, pujaris began an abishekam (ritual anointing) of the Shiva Lingam above his crypt. The samadhi shrine of Swami Sivananda emanates powerful vibrations of peace and joy. The chanting began and as the energy rose, the hall immediately felt full-to-capacity, even though we were the only people in attendance. **(Photo gallery 3, photo 6)**

I spent about half hour in the library and was able to find rare books written by V.T. Neelakantan, published in the 1950's. He had been a devotee of Swami Sivananda and a resident of this ashram in the late 1940's after serving as an overseas correspondent for the Indian Express newspaper during World War II. I was happy to find that the library had a copy of four of his books. They had copies of *The Voice of Babaji*, and *Masterkey to All Ills*, *Death of Death* and a book I had not yet seen called, *One in Three and Three in One*. I thought it quite special to find a book I knew nothing of and randomly discovered in a locked cabinet in the Sivananda Ashram Library.

One in Three and Three in One, explores Babaji's teaching, 'Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity.' The trinity to which VTN refers is not God, Guru, Self or God, the Father, Holy Ghost; instead, it was Self-Reverence, Self-Knowledge, and Self Control. Neelakantan proclaims the importance of that particular sadhana for Kriya Yoga students and suggests that without proper focused concentration on these three attainments, spiritual process cannot be made, regardless of the techniques one might practice. This is what we share in our Yoga sessions and the relevance of the message is not lost on me, considering what the naga babas were telling us.

In Kriya Yoga, we practice specific techniques to develop awareness and widen consciousness by stimulating and developing our potential energy, *kundalini shakti*, but just as important for our spiritual growth is the development of self-control, compassion, kindness and a sense of the sacred.

Perfection is created with Self Reverence, Self-Knowledge, and Self Control and when there is no sense of division between the consciousness of oneself and that of others. This is so rare. However, my heart immediately recalls the few simple, sweet babas, swamis, gurus, we know, or have met, who radiate that rare state of Being and Consciousness. With all those who I have spent some time around, their presence delights and teases and calms and challenges. They shimmer in a rather non-human light. I am reminded of a teaching of Sri Aurobindo. *"True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are; it is what you become."*

We often visited the Kriya Yoga Ashram-Temple of Swami Shankarananda. We were very pleased to find Swamiji in residence during the Kumbh Mela. Swami Shankarananda, an accomplished *Jyotisa*, Vedic astrologer, designed the ashram, overseeing every step of its building. We always looked forward to meditating in the ashram. **(Photo gallery 1, photo 22)**

The beautiful white meditation room is embraced by life-sized murtis of the saints of the Kriya Yoga lineage. Statues of Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda watch over the meditators who sit beneath a uniquely shaped dome, which is divided into the twelve astrological signs. (Photo Gallery 1, photo 23)

Walking through the circular corridor which surrounds the meditation chamber you can hear your own footfalls reverberating everywhere. If you were to clap in the center of the meditation hall, you would also hear sixteen proportional echoes. Swamiji gives us a tour of the whole ashram, with its individual cave-like chambers designed to offer the ideal environment for deep

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The Maha Kumba Mela *continued*

meditation.

Shankaranandaji normally resides in his homeland of Orissa, but says he is in Rishikesh waiting to participate in the Maha Sivaratri celebration on February 12th. He wants to talk to us on the astrological relevance of the Maha Kumbhamela and discusses the quality of asuddha or impurity that arises at this time when Jupiter enters Aquarius and of the particularly powerful configuration especially with the illumination of the full moon, which occurred on January 30. This movement of the planets and heavens on that date, he says, affects movements within the chakras.

He specifically identifies the date and time when the moon rose into ajna chakra. The bath, he goes on, is symbolic of what we must do to purify the powerful collective malas or stains of ignorance, delusion, and karmas, which become so evident in this time period. The timing of the Maha Kumb Mela, he says, is not auspicious for the average worldly person, because it is not good for monetary wealth or sensuality, and in fact it brings with it many difficulties. However, he continues, it is a most auspicious time for the yogi as it can bring about a purifying transformation. Some students appeared distressed by this; some were pleased.

Swami Shankarananda spoke highly of Maha Sivaratri in each year, and its importance for Yoga sadhaks and devotees. All the planets are there on that day, he says. There is always a grand and auspicious day for a ritual bath in the Ganges. It is like bathing in the grace of the Guru. Many of the participants with us now are considering extending their stay to be at the Mela on that day in 2010, February 12th.

We returned to Haridwar to our campsite and evening sadhana. Another important procession of babas, the Nirinjans would be marching to their camp on the following day. They are a wealthy order and their procession, although much smaller, would be impressive. Years before, I was told, helicopters had dropped flowers onto the parade grounds, as the babas marched. I saw no helicopters this year.

At our camp, mid-morning of the next day,

as we were just beginning hatha yoga practice we were visited by a delightful Naga baba. He is a bhakti sadhu, covered head to toe in ash, wearing only a loincloth and carrying a drum. He was chanting Om Namah Shivaya and blessing us all. He tapped us on the head and drummed and danced around, more like a nature sprite, than a man. He seemed unaffected by gravity and appeared to float off the ground at times. He does not leave when we turn back to our practice. He began to practice the asana with us. He is an overachiever and takes off in the poses, deepening into them with kapalabhati breathing. He is a hatha yogi, easing into each asana effortlessly. Funnily enough, he only grimaces with padmasana. I am surprised that he has a bit of tightness in lotus. He stays with us until we have completed our whole sadhana and continues to chant and dance under the tent. His face is ecstatically happy, but his eyes are fierce. He never allows us to ignore him. However, he departed as he arrived, like Siva! No one saw him come, no one saw him go. "Darshan?" I say to Govindan, "if we never see him again at the Mela, I will certainly wonder, who was that?" Although he was having trouble with padmasana? **(Photo Gallery 4, photos 15-21)**

People did seem to occasionally disappear into thin air there. There were funny things happening here and there. On one occasion, while we were meditating in the tiny room where Lahiri Mahasaya used to meditate, at the ashram of Swami Kebalananda, some in our group began seeing high beings come and go. And apparently, as we were walking away from the ashram temple, a tall sadhu carrying a large trident and literally glowing with shakti was standing ringing a bell. Everyone in our party, thirty-six people, saw him, all that is, except for me. Satchidananda was very pleased to see this high being and came over to me, and said, well are you now satisfied that we have seen such a rishi? I was standing with a student from Switzerland. I turned from her to Satchidananda to ask, "what rishi? ringing what bell?" Maya answered, "he walked right in

Continued on Page 11

The Maha Kumba Mela *continued*

front of us and stopped for a second.” But I had neither seen him nor heard his bell. The three of us immediately turned toward the path to the river, in which he had walked, but, was nowhere to be seen. No one in our group saw him again.

Photo Gallery no. 1: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/photosflash/kumbhmela2010/index.html>

Photo Gallery no. 2: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/photosflash/kumbhmela2010-2/index.html>

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Photo Gallery no. 3: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/photosflash/kumbhmela2010-3/index.html>

Photo Gallery no. 4: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/photosflash/kumbhmela2010-4/index.html>

Hymn to unconditional love, by Sandra Brassard

Accessing the state of unconditional love is probably our truest and deepest common desire. But how to get closer? Or rather how can we let ourselves be approached by this pure love?

During a meditation, I addressed unconditional love as one addresses a loved one. I confided and told my story in a burst of poetry.

Dear unconditional love,

Silently, I implored you to join my consciousness.
From the dawn of my life, I recognized you.
In the caring gaze of my parents
Exceptional beings

Dear unconditional love

Later, while my prayers called you.
I met conditional love.
He surprised me, disconcerted me, sometimes even hurt me.
Fortunately, I got up.

Dear unconditional love

I relive that day when my destiny changed.
I rocked my sleeping son.
Wishing I could fall asleep too.
Let go of the burdens of life.

Dear unconditional love

Do you remember?



It was then that my heart opened.
The heavens heard my cry for help.
To learn to inhabit my own body.
And my own existence

Dear unconditional love

It wasn't you who came to me.
But unconditional joy itself
Through her teachings, she guided me.
To look higher
To rise towards my truth
To embellish my life experiences

Dear unconditional love

Can you guess the most precious gift that joy has given me?
The art of detachment!
By becoming a witness, I discover who I really am.
And above all, what I am not.

Dear unconditional love

Do you know who knocked on my door recently?
Yes! The peace! I did not expect that!
I welcomed it and now it settles into me.
What a sweet symphony in my heart, my body,
and my mind
An indescribable feeling

Unconditional Love *continued*

Dear unconditional love

I understand that our destiny is linked.
I perceive your presence more and more.
Something tells me that my whole being is preparing.

To the unexpected

Dear unconditional love

I understood that everything depends on my own view.

No need to call you anymore because you are there in me.

As I allow joy and peace to flourish
You grow too.
And my gratitude is infinite.

Let's dare to be curious about making unconditional love present and alive through our thoughts, our emotions, our outlook, and our actions. He's right there. And it is by paying attention to it that it takes shape and life.

Together sovereigns,

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

Since we met, by Camille

Since we met, seconds don't last the same.
And they dance in the sun whispering your name.

I am by your side.

Since we met, cold no longer exists,
It is just an absence that for a while persists.

Since we met, solitude has a taste,
Taste of calm and power of a storm that awaits.

Since we met, night cannot be called dark,
Because it's filled with a presence and with millions of sparks.

There shall be no fear, but a remembrance,
A memory of Life calling us to her trance.

Love takes more than time, it takes Eternity,
For we wave our souls in endless Unity.

Don't be afraid, Beloved, of what you have asked for.

Your heart is brave enough and your gaze is a mirror.

Together we jump in the fate of the Unknown,
Where Beauty adorns us with everlasting crowns.

You know time has to learn how to fly.

In this battle, you are not alone.

Dedication of new Ashram in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 28, 2023

(Editor's note: the following report was sent by Acharya Kriyanandamayji on October 29, 2023)

Namaste dear Satchidananda ji, Durga Ma and all,



Thank you all for your emails, which expressed your love and appreciation. All the glories to Satguru Babaji.

Herewith attached the google link of the ceremony and a few photos of the rooms in the ground floor: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/hRkQ5wem86xgbD-MW6> and first floor rooms and Yoga Hall, and rooftop: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/LDCJDYW83L5dkz-p6A>

I apologize for the very short notice about this ceremony and for the sound issue at the beginning of the ceremony during the Zoom live stream of the dedication ceremony (*Kumbabishekam*).

The ceremony went well with the blessings of Babaji. Even with short notice, about 30 sadhaks joined us in the morning, and about 40 plus sadhaks joined us in the evening for the sadhana and Holy Yagam. Thank you all for joining us via Zoom as well.

At last, this Ashram became a reality. We are very grateful to our loving Satguru Deva Babaji for choosing us as his instruments in his mission.

Our heartfelt gratitude to Satchidananda ji and Durga Ma, who agreed with my proposal of building the Ashram in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Their continuous support and guidance gave us strength whenever we faced difficulties in the construction. Without their blessings, it wouldn't have occurred.

My love and gratitude to Mr. & Mrs. Aslam Omar, who came forward to help with a loan for the con-

struction and encouraged us to continue the construction even during the economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Thanks to our family members for their support in this mission.

Our gratitude to the donors who made this dream become a reality. Your generous support meant a lot in this mission.

Our gratitude to all the Acharyas and sadhaks who expressed their love and Blessings for this mission to become successful.

Gratitude to Satyanand ji for his love, and concern for us and making sure that we are okay.

We had to face a lot of problems in the construction, and when I look back at the past, we know that Babaji gave us such a beautiful experience, and we learned to accept everything as Blessings. Because we believe that without a Master's will nothing can happen. So, as the instruments of Babaji, we just accepted the situation. Yes, there were times we doubted whether we could complete this building project or not, and the Master is too kind to us to give us hope and reminds us that he is there with us.

When we had to make the final decision a month ago about the previous contractor, I wrote to Satchidananda ji and he immediately replied to my email which gave us great relief, though he was in the middle of the Himalayas pilgrimage. His love to us brought us back to life, and we got our strength back to bring this construction towards its completion. Satchidananda ji, thank you so much for trusting us.

What a blessing to have great teachers Satchidananda ji and Durga Ma along with the Kriya Family in this journey. Our love and gratitude to all of you.

Once the Ashram construction gets completed with the Aluminum windows and other repairs, I will send you more photos of the Ashram and Rooms.

Babaji Saranam. Bowing the lotus feet of Satguru Babaji,

Kriyanandamayji



Order of Acharyas: Annual report and plans for 2024

DO HELP US BRING BABAJI'S KRIYA YOGA
TO PERSONS LIKE YOU ALL AROUND THE
WORLD

This is a good time to donate to "Babaji's Kriya Yoga Order of Acharyas", which will help us to continue to bring Babaji's Kriya Yoga to persons who otherwise would not be able to receive it.

In the past 12 months, since September 2022 the members of the Order of Acharyas did the following:

- Brought more than 100 initiation seminars to more than 900 participants living in 18 countries including Brazil, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Japan, Estonia, Spain, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Australia, Costa Rica, Armenia, the USA and Canada.
- Sponsored and helped organize weekly online Satsangs via Zoom in India, North America, Brazil, Germany, Sri Lanka, Italy and France, and daily sadhana meetings via Zoom in India.
- Maintained an ashram and publishing office in Bangalore, India. It published and distributed most of our books and tapes throughout India.
- Maintained an ashram in Badrinath, India. Hired new staff there. Financed the construction of a new ashram in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- Published the books *Babaji and the 18 Siddhas* and *Voice of Babaji* in Kannada.
- Sponsored free public classes weekly in Babaji's Kriya Yoga, and kirtan events at the Quebec ashram
- Organized a pilgrimage of 24 persons to the Badrinath ashram.
- Completed the training of a new Acharya, Yan Gao, from Shanghai China.

the following:

- Bring initiation seminars to most of the above-named countries,
- Conduct free bi-weekly public asana and meditation classes at our ashrams in Quebec, Bangalore and Sri Lanka.
- Finance the construction of a new ashram in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to be completed by November 2023.
- Publish the book *Kailash*, and volume 3 of the *Voice of Babaji* in Hindi, and the book *Babaji and the 18 Siddhas* in Malayalam.
- Complete the training of new Acharyas in Germany, India and the USA.

The 35 volunteer Acharyas of the Order and many other volunteer organizers need your support to fulfill this program for the year 2023-2024. Your contribution is tax deductible in Canada and the USA. Send it by December 31, 2023, if possible, and receive a receipt for your 2023 Income tax return. Use your credit card!

Our work is financed entirely by your contributions. There are many people all over the world waiting to receive initiation. We will send acharyas as we receive the funds needed to pay for travel expenses.

Donations may be made payable to "Babaji's Kriya Yoga Order of Acharyas", and sent by check, draft or money order to 196 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 90, Eastman, Quebec, Canada J0E 1P0, or paid by a VISA, Mastercard or American Express authorization by calling 1-888-252.9642

In the year 2023 - 2024 the Order plans to do

News and Notes



New! Stream or Download into your mobile phone, PC or tablet the New Video: *Babaji's Kriya Hatha Yoga: Self Realization through Action with Awareness*, 2 hour 5 minutes, in 20 segments, with M. G. Satchidananda and Durga Ahlund. "This is an earnest, unique and inspiring presentation, suitable for experienced beginners and intermediates." – *Yoga Journal*.

For more details and to view 9 minutes of sample segments go to: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore-gumroad.htm>

Quebec Ashram initiation seminars with M. G. Satchidananda. 1st initiation: May 17-19, May 24-26, August 30 to September 1, 2024; 2nd initiation: June 21-23, and October 11-13, 2024; 3rd initiation: and July 19-18, 2024. **In French:** 1st initiation May 10-12, September 6-8, 2024, 2nd initiation: June 14-16; 3rd initiation: June 28 to July 7, 2024.

Pilgrimage to Badrinath, India with MG Satchidananda, September 12 to 29, 2024. <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/Pilgrimages-himalayas.htm>



Ashram with of Mt. Neelakantan



Second Initiation October 2023 with 21 participants

New Ebook: Inspiration for Yoga, by Nacho Albalat, Nityananda. ISBN: 978-1-987972-33-7. 118 pages Price: US\$5.50, CN\$7.00 including GST. Or €5.00 For more information or to order click here: [https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#inspiration for yoga book](https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#inspiration%20for%20yoga%20book)

Real Yoga takes us to union with the Self, eternal and joyful, surpassing the nature of our ego, what we think we are. This book, born from practice, seeks to inspire the reader to follow the yogic path of Self-realization, until the goal is reached.

Continued on Page 16



These short messages are aimed at those who want to know Yoga and those who have been practicing it for years. They are written from the perspective of the Kriya Yoga of the Siddhas. They offer inspiration to practice Yoga and a guide to accompany us on the path, which is also the path of life. Because our whole life is our Yoga, our path to the Self.

Receive our new Babaji message cards! They inspire and remind you of Kriya Babaji and the wisdom of our tradition. We will send them to you via **Whatsapp** 2-3 x per week in 6 languages as per your choice. Simultaneously, we will post them in English on Instagram ([instagram.com/babajiskriyayoga](https://www.instagram.com/babajiskriyayoga))

For more information [Click here](#) to Download PDF.

Online satsang meetings, Yoga classes, questions and answers. Many of our Acharyas are offering their support to initiates and non-initiates through online streaming Hatha Yoga classes, as well as satsang meetings through cyberspace communications like Zoom. However, other Kriya Yoga techniques which are taught during initiation seminars cannot be shared during these. Their purpose is to encourage participants to meditate, and secondarily to give some inspiration. Questions from initiates about the Kriya Yoga techniques will be answered only *in a personalized one-to-one setting, where confidentiality is ensured, either by email or a phone call or in person.*

Use Zoom to join online Kriya Hatha Yoga classes, meditation and satsang meetings. Watch recordings of these from 2020 to 2023 on [patreon.com/babajiskriyayoga](https://www.patreon.com/babajiskriyayoga)

International satsang for initiates: Every first **Sunday of the month**. 13:30 GMT+1 (15.00 Central European Time; 9:30 Montreal time) 14.30 Central European Time, 8.30 Montreal Time

International online Zoom satsang for initiates: We are doing our daily practice including pra-

nayama, meditation and mantra and are looking forward for you to join us!

We meet online every day for one hour at 12:30 CET, and every **Sunday** at 13:30 UTC, which is 8:30 am Montreal time. The language is English. Contact nathalie.kriya@gmx.de for particulars of how to join group. Please state where, when and by whom you were initiated.

Daily Satsang – Babaji's Kriya Yoga Sri Lanka: Every day (Monday to Saturday) 11:30 GMT (5 p.m. India Standard Time. For details: https://kriyababaji.it/babajiskriyayoga_online_satsang/

In Sao Paulo, Brazil: for initiates: Satsang every day, 6:30 p.m. (São Paulo Time Zone). Hatha Yoga class every Friday, at 8:00 a.m. for everyone. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5184926117?pwd=UnFVWmdSZC9PK0JoN0xPTGMxd3pSQTO9>
ID: 518 492 6117 Password: babaji

At Flora des Aguas, Cunha, Brazil: Monday to Friday: 6:30 am to 7:30 am: Kriya Hatha Yoga and classical Yoga asanas: 7:30 am to 8:10 am: Pranayama, meditation, reading and Vedic mantras. Contact: fabifsamorim@hotmail.com. In Portuguese.

In India: Sunday Satsang. 12.00 GMT+1 (14.00 CET) duration: 60 to 90 minutes. <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pdfs/events/english Intl-satsang-infotext-sunday.pdf>

Visit our e-commerce site www.babajiskriyayoga.net for purchasing with your VISA, American Express or Mastercard all of the books and other products sold by Babaji's Kriya Yoga Publications, or for donations to the Order of Acharyas. Your credit card information is encrypted and kept secure. Check it out!

Subscribe to the correspondence course, The Grace of Babaji's Kriya Yoga. We invite you to join us in this adventure of Self-exploration and discovery, drawn from the books dictated by Babaji

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New and Notes *continued*

in 1952 and 1953. Receive by mail, each month, a lesson of 18-24 pages developing a specific theme, with practical exercises. For details go here:

<https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/grace-course.htm>

Visit Durga's blog. www.seekingtheself.com

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