



B a b a j i ' s

Kriya Yoga Journal

Simple Living and High Thinking

By M. G. Satchidananda

I am sometimes asked how did I become so dedicated to Babaji's Kriya Yoga? In reply I refer to the "counter cultural" period of the late 1960's when I began to question the values of American materialistic culture, and how I was inspired by my teacher, Yogi Ramaiah to embrace the Yoga Siddha culture of south India. My embrace of it became complete during the year that I spent there from 1972 to 1973, while living and practicing Babaji's Kriya Yoga in the ashrams he had established there. This culture could be summarized with the words "Simple living and high thinking," which was written on a sign in our ashrams and centers. It is also a phrase that Mahatma Gandhi popularized. Yogi Ramaiah was a follower

of Gandhi and his teachings. As this culture has almost completely disappeared, and is even largely rejected in India today, both by its leaders and the man in the street, it is a challenge for me to inspire others to embrace it, without pointing to stereotypical images of Gandhi and Hindu asceticism.

My embrace of it 50 years ago, included the same mode of dress as Gandhi at all times except during weekdays at the office, that is a hand spun cotton dhoti and shoulder shawl, which we purchased from the Gandhi cooperative stores, and many austerities: vegetarian diet, sleeping on the floor, allowing my hair and beard to grow, practicing Yoga eight hours a day, observing days of silence, and fasting every week, avoidance of tele-

vision and a social code. I maintained these forms of austerity or tapas, strictly for 18 years while living in the ashrams and centers under Yogi Ramaiah's direction. While in India, people would sometimes ask me if I was a satyagraha disciple of Gandhi because my clothing resembled that of Gandhi. This manner of dress gradually disappeared in India and was replaced by pants and shirts as Indians attempted to dress like Westerners.

When I began to share Babaji's Kriya Yoga with persons in various cultures around the world, I too stopped wearing khadi dhotis in public, to avoid giving others a first impression that I was a member of the Hare Krishna movement! Thankfully, the Gandhian mode of dress had served to keep me socially apart from the negative influence of the American culture, until I became largely immune to it. Abandoning this Gandhian mode of dress enabled me to share the techniques of Babaji's Kriya Yoga with persons in many different cultures without provoking a fear that they would have to adopt Indian modes of dress or Hinduism. While I have continued to embrace the other austerities, values and virtues, or *niyamas*, which inform "simple living and high thinking," I sometimes wonder what more I could do to inspire students

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to embrace such values and virtues, which I believe are prerequisite and essential to the path. My residual hope for its future lies in the conservation and environmental movements. Let me attempt to explain why?



Why do so many students of Yoga fail?

Culture includes much more than clothing and language. It is essentially the values that one embraces and their aims. The word "culture" is derived from the Latin word *culte*, which means "to worship." In our modern materialistic culture, what is worshipped is materialistic products and services which can be bought and sold, with as little delay and effort as possible. People want and expect instant gratification. *Even in the field of Yoga, the need for instant gratification has reduced its presentation to a form of physical exercise, with little appreciation for the values which enable it to yield its potential in all five planes of existence.* Worse, one pursues spiritual materialism,

that is so called "spiritual experiences," and powers, and when they fail to come, cease all efforts. We have a consumer culture, fueled by never ending desires, competition, and the search for comfort and pleasure. During the past 50 years this materialistic, consumer culture has largely replaced most other cultures with the help of television, the internet, and the globalization of markets.

Life is a series of choices. When I hear students say, "I don't have time to practice Yoga," what they are really saying is that the practice of Yoga is not my priority, because everyone has twenty-four hours each day. What determines your priorities? What is driving you? In other words, what do you value most?

To realize the potential of Yoga one needs to understand and adopt its values, and then consciously choose to make those values consistent with one's thoughts, words, and actions. As we are all driven by our habits, we must exercise this power to choose, our volition, repeatedly until they become habitual. As Aristotle said, 'virtue is a kind of habit'. It is a habit of right choice. In other words, virtue is a synthesis of knowledge and habit, consciousness, and activity, thought as well as will. This is a tremendous task. Otherwise, the typical student fails to grasp what is required, and "Yoga" remains merely a band aid on life's wounds, and means to support a materialist, destructive culture. This begins with some fundamental existential

questions about one's purpose.

Furthermore, those who deny the existence of God, or who fail to realize their spiritual potentiality, forget that we cannot have a direct experience of any potentiality without bringing that potentiality under some intense or striking conditions. For example, as laymen we take it for granted that water is liquid, even though scientists tell us that it is only a combination of gases. The gaseous nature of water is its potentiality. If challenged that it is gaseous, the scientist would take the doubter into the laboratory, pass an electric current through the water, and the doubter would see with his own eyes the gaseous nature of water. Similarly, the infinitude, transcendence, immanence, indestructibility and omnipresence of the soul are potentialities which can be made manifest when the spiritual discipline of Yoga is practically followed. But unless a person applies himself or herself to this discipline and the intense conditions of its ethical restraints and virtues, known as the yamas and the niyamas, one cannot experience the Divinity within.

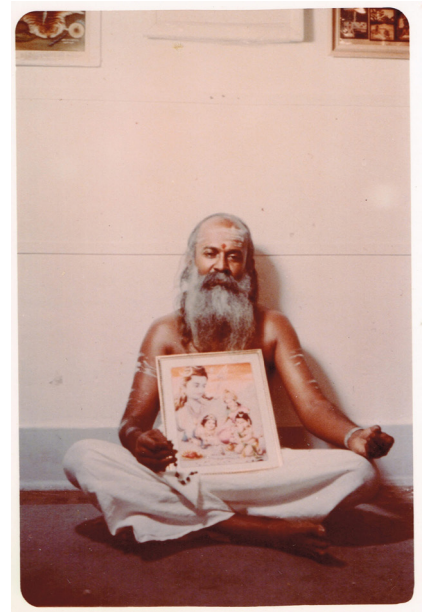
Why Am I Here? What am I looking for?

Why am I practicing Yoga? How would you answer these questions? Peace of mind, better health, love, God, a spiritual experience, an answer to an existential question are typical answers. What do they all share? Is there any word which would summarize what everyone is looking for? That word is "happiness."

Even those who are not interested in Yoga are looking for happiness in various ways: a meal, television entertainment, sports, sex, alcohol, even working late because "I will be happy when I finish my work!" So, everyone manages to find some happiness. But happiness is like picking up water with your hands because it slips away so easily. "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" is a well-known phrase in the United States Declaration of Independence which affirms human rights.

This pursuit is endless until one realizes that *lasting* happiness cannot be found in things which do not last. What lasts? Everything is changing: your mental and emotional states, your relationships, the weather, your bank balance for example. Furthermore, happiness itself is an emotion, a movement in your vital body, which will easily be replaced by other emotions, such as anger, sad-

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ness, lust, or pride when events or circumstances change. Any event can “push your buttons” and provoke reactions which are born of past emotion charged memories. Knowing this, the wise, therefore, do not pursue happiness by trying to change *things out there*, trying to avoid what may “push their buttons.” Instead, the wise use all events and circumstances to go *inside* and to find and let go of attachments and aversions.

What interrupts our moments of happiness? The Siddhas have informed us that these are interrupted by the memories of attachments and aversions, in other words, liking and disliking, which arise from the subconscious in contact with new sensory events. They diagnosed the cause of our suffering: “we are dreaming with our eyes open”. For example, someone says something to you which you do not like, or you fall, and you feel anger; or you get hit by a cold blast of winter air and feel depressed; or the soup is cold or too salty, and you feel regret; or you get a letter from the tax department and feel fear.

The Siddhas did not stop with diagnosing the cause of our suffering. They also prescribed the remedy: the practice of Kriya Yoga, including self-discipline, self-study and surrender of the egoistic perspective. This is a perennial practical philosophy whose aim, as we shall see below, is the highest, while being grounded here and now in the world.



Materialism is responsible for the psychological distress, social and political conflicts, and the destruction of our environment.

Modern science has benefited humanity with vast material resources, but at the same time, it has deprived humanity of spiritual and ethical development. In their place it has given rise to a commercial, consumer

culture which replaces the finer human values and sentiments with a pursuit of wealth and possessions. Greed and competition for wealth has resulted not only in tremendous economic inequalities and social conflict, but also the deterioration of mental health due to stress and depression, and the destruction of the planet's environment which is now an existential threat to humanity.

In emphasizing natural or positive sciences and largely ignoring normative sciences such as ethics and logic,

Western materialistic culture has also brought about a disparity between theory and the practice of philosophy and has kept science apart from religion. This has been made worse by the needs of scientists and religious leaders to put the vested interests of their organizations above all other considerations. Each of us has the power to replace materialism's values with those of Yoga. What are they? To understand and appreciate these one must understand its universal ethics, known as *dharma*, “right aims and actions”.

Indian ethical ideals laid down by sages thousands of years ago provide universal aims and means.

Logic, ethics, and aesthetics with their respective aims of truth, goodness, and beauty, known as Satya, Sivam and Sundaram, in India's philosophical traditions, are the prerogative of humankind and distinguish it from lower animals. The superiority of humans over animals lies in living on a higher plane, where one apprehends truth, realizes good, and creates beauty and harmony. These three are also the aims of Classical Western philosophy's three normative sciences: logic, ethics, and aesthetics whose three aspects of human experience are respectively: cognition (knowledge/thinking), affection (feelings), and conative (action). They all share an ultimate goal of spiritual perfection, the intuitive realization of our oneness with the absolute reality, the *summum bonum*, the supreme good of life. Unlike in the West, however, in India, these ideal aims took a practical turn to be realized by the aspirant in one's life rather than in a heavenly or eschatological afterlife.

Developments in these three normative sciences offer each of us the means to realize “truth, goodness and beauty,” and when applied, a cure for the evils which have crept into modern society. This is true because these ideals were never regarded as mere theories of morality, but as modes of spiritual life by adopting which the individual and society could develop in a harmonious manner.

Kriya, action with awareness begins with knowledge of ethics, the yamas and niyamas

What are ethics? Ethics can be defined as the study of human behavior which proposes for consideration the supreme good of *summum bonum* of human life, and which formulates the judgments of right and wrong and good and evil. It is derived from the Greek *ethos*, which also means character. A synonym of ‘ethics’ is ‘moral philosophy,’ which is based upon the Latin word *mores*, meaning habits or customs. Ethics proposes those principles which make our conduct moral or right. The word ‘right’ is derived from the Latin word *rectus*, meaning ‘straight’ or ‘according to rule.’ Rules are the means. But what is the end? We can answer this question only when we analyse the word ‘good,’ which is derived from the German word ‘*gut*.’ ‘*Gut*’ means anything useful or serviceable for some end or purpose. If we accept this meaning of the word good, and

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regard ethics as the science of good conduct, we arrive at the conclusion that ethics is concerned with the end or goal of life. Not an individual's personal goals, but with the supreme goal or ultimate end to which the entire life is directed, the supreme good.

In Western ethics, this supreme good has been referred to variously. Hedonism regards happiness as the supreme good. Perfectionism considers self-realization as the supreme good. Rationalism takes reason as the supreme good. In recent decades, Western materialism largely subverted the lofty aims of ethics to what I call applied ethics, for example, the Geneva convention treatment of prisoners, medical ethics, codes of ethics for lawyers, financial advisors, psychiatrists, even registered Yoga teachers! Even Facebook and Google employ ethicists to determine policies with regards to privacy. Ethics in Christianity and Judaism begin with the Ten Commandments. Each sect of these two religions has developed various ethical principles which support their own ecclesiastical aims and interpretations of the Bible. They are legalistic religious belief systems, rather than philosophic systems, where God is believed to be the source of law, judgment, and reward or punishment.

Almost all Indian systems of Indian philosophy, including classical Yoga, agree that *Moksha*, or liberation is the supreme good, which includes the removal of the sources of suffering, while differing on the means and results of acquiring it.

Ethics is also a normative science. A science may be defined as a systematic, methodical, and exhaustive knowledge of a subject. A science can be naturalistic or positive when it describes what a subject is and expresses factual judgments. It observes facts, classifies them, and proposes natural laws about them. A normative science adopts some standard or norm and pronounces value judgments of propriety or appreciation about its subject matter and how it ought to be. For example, logic is a normative science of thought which tells us what our thought must be to be valid, true, or consistent. When we say that ethics deals with the right and wrong, and the good and the evil of conduct, what we mean is that it gives appreciative judgments of conduct.

While logic may be an abstract theoretical and formal science of thought, ethics is concerned with the behavioral activity of the individual. Ethics requires knowledge, capacity, and volition. Knowing right from wrong does not make a person good. A moral or virtuous act has been chosen voluntarily. One is inspired by goodwill. One must voluntarily act according to one's knowledge of moral principles.

My own embrace of Yoga was in part motivated by doubts regarding some ethical teachings in Christianity. When I was about 9 years old, I asked my Lutheran minister "what happens to the souls of good people after death if they do not believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior?" My minister told me that their souls would go to eternal suffering in hell. This appeared to be inconsistent with Christianity's teaching that God loves you. It

prompted me to begin searching elsewhere for answers to questions such as this. After ten years, I found what I was searching for in Babaji's Kriya Yoga.

The Yamas (social restraints) and the Niyamas (virtues)

The yamas are social restraints, or controls of some activity or impulse, without which moral behavior is not possible. There are five: (1) non harming, *ahimsa*; which includes thought, word and action, and to be possible, requires universal love and brotherhood; (2) truthfulness, *satya*, a restraint on the indulgence in falsehood, including exaggeration; (3) non-stealing, *asteya*; respect for the property of others; (4) chastity, *brahmacharya*; literally, moving with aspiration towards the absolute; (5) greedlessness, *aparigraha*; limiting one's wants and possessions, simple living and high thinking, as avarice leads to attachment, anger, delusion. As I have written about these extensively elsewhere, and space is limited here, for more on the yamas see the references at the end of this article.

The niyamas are virtues which the Yogi necessarily must develop to form good habits and a personality which is integrated with the soul, to infuse spiritual aspiration, and accelerate removal of the causes of suffering: ignorance of one's true identity, egoism, attachment, aversion and fear of death. They reflect Indian ethics' insistence upon giving a premium to love and humanitarian feeling over self-aggrandizement and economic gain. They are:

1. Purity or *sauca*, keeping the body clean and the mind filled with love, brotherhood, compassion, kindness and meekness; Patanjali tells us that "by the practice of the limbs of Yoga, the impurities dwindle away, and there dawns the light of wisdom leading to discriminative discernment." – Sutras II.28. "Moreover, one gains purity of being, *sattva*, joy in the mind, one pointedness, mastery over the senses and fitness for Self-realization."- Sutra II.41. The inclusion of purity of the mind by the cultivating of benevolent habits, fellow-feeling, love and compassion, is ethically significant, especially in the modern age of economic culture, where personal and industrial competition, hedonism, pornography, and political partisanship which have led to their disappearance. 'Being pure, the Seer, through the power of merely seeing [directly] perceives thoughts' - Sutra I.20
2. Contentment, *santosha*, means not seeking over-enthusiastically the pleasures of the world and being satisfied with whatever one gets, as a result of one's honest labors. "By contentment, supreme joy is gained." – Sutra II.42. Contentment is an inner poise, which implies harmony, delight in oneself

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and inner love, wherein one is untroubled by difficulties around oneself. Whether anyone feels it, or not, it is due to his or her openness to it. It becomes an ethical practice, not only a virtue, when you share your contentment and joy with others, but not your discontent; when you practice seeing the best in others, not their faults.

3. Austerity, *tapas*, voluntary self-challenge; any intense or prolonged practice for Self- realization which involves overcoming the natural tendencies or resistance of the body, emotions, and mind. It includes forbearing patiently the vicissitudes of life, with its ups and downs, being equal minded in the face of success and failure, loss and gain, fame and shame.
4. Self-study, *svadhyaya* is not the mere study of sacred texts but includes the observation of one's own behavior as well as the psychodynamics of the mind. This may take the form of recording of our experience in a journal, which permits transformation of what was a subjective experience into an objective one. As a result. we become aware of what remains, the Seer, or Witness, and gradually we cease to identify with the Seen, sensory objects, the personality, the sum of mental movements and habitual reactions. Self- study brings discrimination and self- mastery. The Siddhas like Patanjali aspired not simply for transcendence but also transformation of the lower human nature.
5. Complete surrender and constant meditation on the Supreme Being, or the Lord, referred to as *Isvarapranidhana*. The Lord, referred to as *Isvara*, is a compound of two words: *Siva* and the special self. Devotion or surrender to the Supreme Being includes the cultivation of unconditional love for the Lord, as well letting go of what disturbs. Equanimity follows ultimately. You "let go and let God". Self-surrender to God, indicating the theistic aspect of Yoga, is transformed into the path of love and devotion. *Anbu Sivam*, Love is God, say the Siddhas. To love and serve man is to love and serve God and raises ethics to the highest level. Love for the Lord makes manifest what was previously only potential, one's own Divinity.

Sincerity is doing what you intend to do

Yogi Ramaiah, my teacher, often repeated "Sincerity is the only currency of any value in Babaji's Kriya Yoga." Sincerity is doing what you intend. In other words, the power of good will, volition, when applied to the knowledge of the values, virtues and methods of Yoga will enable you to overcome your bad habits, the flaws in your character and in human nature, and the resistance to transform them. You cannot purchase happiness with money.

You must overcome the limitations of your nature which now control you and which are the cause of your suffering. Knowledge of the values and virtues, the yamas and niyamas of Yoga is a necessary condition, but sincerity is the sufficient condition for continuing towards siddhi or perfection of our divine human potential.

The above article addresses the questions what are the distinct cultural values and virtues of Yoga and why they are so necessary to transforming our human nature and fulfilling our potential? For guidance on how to practice them, the yamas and niyamas of Yoga, see the references below.

References for more information on the Yamas:

Opposite Doing: The Five Yogic Keys to Good Relationships, Ebook from Babaji's Kriya Yoga and Publications, https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#opposite_doing_ebook

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Why Yoga is Like Surfing

By M.G. Satchidananda

I recently watched a movie entitled “Breath.” it reminded me of my early years as a surfer. As a modern story it illustrates traditional Yoga’s wisdom teachings. It’s about two teenage boys, named Pikelet and Loonie, growing up by the ocean on the west coast of Australia. At the age of 13, each of them discovers the thrill of surfing. After initial awkward attempts, they gradually develop more skill, particularly after a very experienced but unassuming surfer named Santo, begins to guide them. After several months, they discover in some magazines on surfing that Santo is one of the world’s greatest champion surfers. Santo takes them to more and more dangerous places where he helps them to overcome their fears of being crushed by big waves against the hidden reefs and shoreline rocks. He shows them how to determine where to wait without getting crushed and when the weather conditions and tidal currents will create the best conditions. Pikelet is somewhat blocked by fear. He has loving parents, a girlfriend and is a good student. When Pikelet freezes and refuses to try to catch big waves, Santo repeatedly reminds him to control his fear by breathing. Throughout the movie Pikelet continues to struggle with fear. Loonie lives only with his alcoholic father, who physically abuses him, above his father’s bar. He drops out of school. Loonie is fearless, even reckless, but excels in surfing.



My early years as a surfer

This movie reminded me of my early years growing up on the beach in southern California. I bought my first surfboard in 1958, a light-weight balsa wood “Velsey.” Its underside fiberglass surface was indigo in color. On its top side, you could see the wood grain through the clear fiberglass. Its fin was made from mahogany. As I was less than 5 feet tall, and it was 8 feet long, and the waves in Hermosa, Redondo, and Dockweiler Beach were sometimes even higher, I could relate to Michael’s feelings of excitement and fear in the film. Surfing brought up both emotional thrills and chills in me. Westchester High School, which I attended in the mid 1960’s was only a mile from the beach. I surfed at many other beaches up and down the coast with my friends in a club. We wore blue jackets with our

club’s name, *The Pacific*, imprinted on the back in big letters. I spent all of my summers during my teenage years at the beach. The ocean was also deeply mysterious and made me question my purpose and reason for existence. By the time I was seventeen, my view that “life is a beach” dimmed in the shadows of these existential questions and the threat of being drafted to fight in the Viet Nam war.

I attribute my early attraction to meditation to the many summers I spent at the beach and surfing. That environment provided an ideal environment for me to ponder existential questions. My graduating class at Westchester High School, had 35 students who received National Merit Scholarships, more than any other in the State of California that year, and while I was not one of them, I felt pushed to excel academically, and probably worked harder than most of my peers. In that way I took after my father, who had received a full scholarship to attend Carnegie Institute of Technology’s College of Engineering in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and graduated second in his class in 1939 with a degree in the emerging field of aeronautical engineering. He was also a philosopher, and at the age of 12, he gifted to me Encyclopedia Britannica’s “Great Books” series, in 52 volumes, the works of all the great thinkers of Western Civilization. I still have not read all of them!

Why is Yoga like surfing?

Almost everything in the movie “Breath” could be viewed as metaphors for what I have learned about Yoga. This first dawned on me when Santo spoke dismissively of his photos and awards as a champion surfer when the two boys showed him the surfing magazines they had found. “Even photos you take are meaningless” he said. “The only moments that are important are those when you forget who you are and feel that you are one with the waves.” Loonie snorts in reply: “Don’t give me that hippie talk.”

As a Yogi, I see the world as a play of forces. I see that people are individually and collectively moved by “waves” of emotions, especially fear, pride, anger, lust, and that only the wise seek to transcend them, to become One with the “ocean,” to “forget” the individuated self, and surrender the ego’s perspective to that of that of the Witness of life’s dramas.

The name “Santo,” was for me a reference to *santosh*, the yogic observance, or virtue, concerned with self-discipline. Santosh is contentment, which can be cultivated by appreciating what we have, and desiring no more than what is necessary for maintaining ones’ life.

There are four other observances according to Patanjali in *Yoga sutras* II.32: *sauca* or purification, and is to be done at the physical, vital and mental levels; *tapas* or intense self-challenge to overcome any limitation or defect in one’s human nature; *svadhyaya* or self-study includes the observation of one’s own behavior as well as the psychodynamics of the mind; study of sacred texts;

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ishvaradhanava or surrender to the Lord, or the perspective of the ego to the Witness perspective.

In *Tirumandiram* verse 557 another ten *niyamas* are given:

Tapas, meditation, serenity and holiness
Charity, vows in Saiva way and Siddhanta learning
Sacrifice, Siva, puja, and thoughts pure
With these ten, the one in *niyama* perfects His way.

There can be no physical or spiritual life without an order and rhythm. The *niyamas* are means for a harmonious and orderly life, which aids to efficiency and perfection and makes the Yoga sadhak fit for whatever work is given to him, or her. All of them have as their purpose, to help you to realize the perfection your potential. They are not merely, the second of eight limbs in *astanga yoga*, but emblematic of those who have reached the highest, integral *samadhi* or Self-realization at all levels.

Why Yoga? Why surf?

The motivations for practicing Yoga and for surfing are as varied as the people who do it. For surfing, there is the challenge, the thrill, the magnetic pull of the ocean and attraction to the forces of nature. Some persons, like my history professor at Georgetown University, who had never tried it, told me that it was a form of “escapism.” For most of my school friends, the motivation was also social and integral to the local “Beach Boys” culture of the 1960’s. The popular musical group, “The Beach Boys,” went to our rival Redondo Beach High School. There was also a need to rebel against the political and social conservatism of our parents, most of whom, like my father, were engineers employed by local aerospace companies designing military aircraft and missiles and veterans of World War II.

Similarly, the motivations of those who practice Yoga is a varied today as their understanding of the word Yoga, which has become a homograph, a word with many different meanings. Like surfing, for some it is the challenge of mastering poses, for others it is social, still others do it to lose weight, or for health. Very few see it as a spiritual discipline, its traditional meaning. As with surfing, comparatively few do it to experience spiritual oneness. When Pikelet balks at attempting to ride the most dangerous waves at a beach known as “Old Smokey,” Santo says to him “I thought you were a real surfer, not an ordinary one.”

Both surfing and Yoga require mindfulness: attention and practice.

Mindfulness is being attentive and kind to our inner and outer experience. It consists of attention and practice. It helps us to train our attention to notice what we normally miss, such as physical tension, any emotion, or habitual patterns of thinking or reacting. It helps us to recognize our blind spots, which are things we don’t notice about ourselves, and consequently cause us to suffer, and much

stress. For example, a tendency to react with anger, to worry, or to become depressed when the unexpected happens.

Human’s brains have evolved to ensure survival by understanding and navigating myriad threats, and consequently we have what is a “negativity bias,” brain wiring to learn from what is negative or threatening to our survival, but we are not wired to learn from what is positive. “Miss a tiger today and you won’t be around tomorrow. Miss a carrot today, and you’ll have more chances to get one tomorrow.” So, we worry too much about what might happen. Unless there is an effort to put our attention on what is good, we usually miss it.

Santo helped Pikelet to recognize and overcome his blind spot in facing big waves by reminding him to take several mindful breaths and to let go of his fear of what might happen if he fell off his surfboard.

In our blind spots It is easy to zone out and distract ourselves, so it requires practice to develop sufficient stability in our awareness long enough to ask ourselves honest questions and to look with curiosity and clarity into any given situation, question, or problem. This is insight.

Blind spots operate unconsciously and automatically while a flow state operates consciously and automatically. They cause us much suffering and stress. The state of blindness comes from being lost and not seeing clearly, while the state of flow comes from being found and letting go from a place of clear seeing.

It takes effort in the beginning to put one’s attention on the breath, the body, thoughts or emotions. With practice such attentional focus becomes automatic. A default state of being present, easeful and content, which might be called “flow” replaces blindness.

Scans of the brains of long-term meditators using fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) reveals that unlike those who are new to meditation, they do not use the part of the brain needed for decision making and knowing, the pre-frontal cortex, to concentrate, and so do concentrate with much less effort. Research also reveals that it takes them longer to deplete their brain’s blood glucose, the level of sugar circulating in the blood at any given time, which is the main source of energy for their body’s cells. Consequently, they can maintain awareness effortlessly all of the time, and remain in the flow of life, seeing clearly their blind spots, responding to challenges with kindness and creativity, instead of reacting to negative biases.

Santo, the guru

Like Santo on his surfboard, riding the big waves, maintaining balance, which is referred to in Yoga and Ayurveda, as *sattva*, also means remaining equal minded in the face of the dualities of life, such as pain and pleasure, liking and disliking, getting and losing. Otherwise, like the surfer who loses balance and falls off the surfboard, we can be crushed by the waves of emotions and lose sight of *Sat*, true Being, Truth, *That* which underlies everything

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as *satchidananda*, absolute being, consciousness and bliss. When we maintain *sattva*, balance, equilibrium, calmness, we will be able to ride the waves of life's challenges, and realize Yoga, oneness. To maintain calm is the first objective in Yoga. In it, the Yogi can hear the guidance of the inner guru, what Sri Aurobindo refers to at the "psychic being".

At one point Santo tells the boys: "Don't even talk about what you experienced on the waves! Just be it." This reminded me of my teacher's admonition not to talk about *samadhi*, the breathless state of communion with God, or any spiritual experience. This is because when you talk about it, you bring it down to the mental and intellectual level, and you open yourself to the judgments and doubts or others. Also, the more you talk about it, the further from *samadhi* you go, because *samadhi* is not what you think. It is literally what you don't think. It includes mental silence. Talking about it is like trying to measure the ocean with a teacup. You can never know *samadhi*, you can only be it.

The end of the movie "Breath," makes it a cautionary tale for both surfers and Yogis. Before even reaching the age of 18, Loonie, the fearless surfer dies. Pikelet has already walked away from surfing with Santo and Loonie and returns to his parents and school. Santo is to become

a father. We are left hoping that his love expands in new ways. Pikelet, years later, mourning the loss of his friend, says of him: "He was fearless because he felt he was worthless, and so had nothing to lose." He also tells us that now, as an adult, he sometimes goes surfing, "but simply to feel the waves." I will not spoil the ending of the film for you by telling you more than this. Each of them makes choices. As will you. While it may appear that you have free will to make your choices, we are all unique products of our conditioning, our past choices and the culture and historical forces of our youth. That is why the wise, such as the Siddhas Patanjali and Tirumular tell us that you need to cultivate the *niyamas*, the virtuous observances of Yoga, with "practice and attention", to replace your past conditioning and realize *siddhi* or perfection of our potential.

For further reading on these subjects:

The Kriya Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Siddhas, by M. Govindan

The Yoga of Tirumular: Essays on the Tirumandiram, by Drs. T.N. Ganapathy and KR Arumugam;

The Thirumandiram.

Available from: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm>

Protect Your Brain from Cognitive Decline: 3 simple practices

By M. G. Satchidananda

You might think that the impact of aging on the brain is something you can't do much about. After all, isn't it an inevitability?

To an extent, as we may not be able to rewind the clock and change our levels of higher education or intelligence (both factors that delay the onset of symptoms of aging). But adopting specific lifestyle behaviors—whether you're in your thirties or late forties—can have a tangible effect on how well you age. Even in your fifties and beyond, activities like learning a new language or musical instrument, taking part in aerobic exercise, and developing meaningful social relationships can do wonders for your brain. There's no question that when we compromise on looking after ourselves, our aging minds pick up the tab.

The Aging Process and Cognitive Decline

Over time, there is a build-up of toxins such as tau proteins and beta-amyloid plaques in the brain that correlate to the aging process and associated cognitive decline. Although this is a natural part of growing older, many factors can exacerbate it. Stress, neurotoxins such as alcohol and [lack of \(quality and quantity\) sleep](#) can speed up the process.

Neuroplasticity—the function that allows the brain to change and develop in our lifetime—has three mechanisms: synaptic connection, myelination, and neurogenesis. The key to resilient aging is improving neurogenesis, the birth of new neurons. Neurogenesis happens far more

in babies and children than adults. A [2018 study by researchers at Columbia University](#) shows that in adults, this type of neuroplastic activity occurs in the hippocampus, the part of the brain that lays down memories. This makes sense as we respond to and store new experiences every day and cement them during sleep. The more we can experience new things, activities, people, places, and emotions, the more likely we are to encourage neurogenesis.

With all this in mind, we can come up with a three-point plan to encourage "resilient aging" by activating neurogenesis in the brain:

1. Get Your Heart Rate Up

Aerobic exercise such as running or brisk walking [has a potentially massive impact on neurogenesis](#). A [2016 rat study](#) found that endurance exercise was most effective in increasing neurogenesis. It wins out over HIIT sessions and resistance training, although doing a variety of exercise also has its benefits.

Aim to do aerobic exercise for 150 minutes per week, and choose the gym, the park, or natural landscape over busy roads to avoid compromising brain-derived neurotrophic factor production (BDNF), a growth factor that encourages neurogenesis that aerobic exercise can boost. However, [exercising in polluted areas](#) decreases production.

Continued on Page 9

Cognitive *continued*

If exercising alone isn't your thing, consider taking up a team sport or one with a social element like table tennis. Exposure to [social interaction](#) can also increase the neurogenesis, and in many instances, doing so lets you practice your hand-eye coordination, which [research has suggested](#) leads to structural changes in the brain that may relate to a range of cognitive benefit. This combination of coordination and socializing [has been shown](#) to increase brain thickness in the parts of the cortex related to social/emotional welfare, which is crucial as we age.

2. Change Your Eating Habits

Evidence shows that calorie restriction, [intermittent fasting](#), and time-restricted eating encourage neurogenesis in humans. In rodent studies, intermittent fasting has been found to improve cognitive function and brain structure, and reduce symptoms of metabolic disorders such as diabetes. Reducing [refined sugar](#) will help reduce oxidative damage to brain cells, too, and we know that increased oxidative damage has been linked with a higher risk of developing [Alzheimer's disease](#). Twenty-four hour water-only fasts have also [been proven](#) to increase longevity and encourage neurogenesis.

Try any of the following, after checking with your doctor:

- 24-hour water-only fast once a month
- Reducing your calorie intake by 50%-60% on two non-consecutive days of the week for two to three months or on an ongoing basis
- Reducing calories by 20% every day for two weeks. You can do this three to four times a year
- Eating only between 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or 12 p.m. to

8 p.m. as a general rule

3. Prioritize Sleep

Sleep helps promote the brain's neural "cleaning" glymphatic system, which flushes out the build-up of age-related toxins in the brain (the tau proteins and beta amyloid plaques mentioned above). When people are sleep-deprived, we see evidence of memory deficits, and if you miss a whole night of sleep, [research proves that it impacts IQ](#). Aim for seven to nine hours, and nap if it suits you. Our need to sleep decreases as we age.

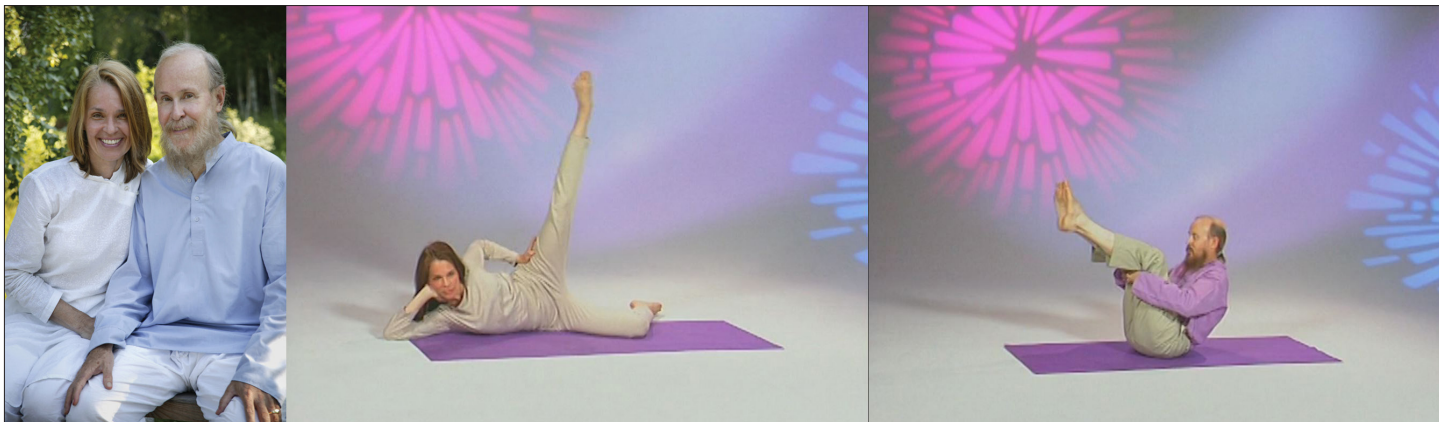
Of course, there are [individual exceptions](#), but having consistent sleep times and making sure you're getting sufficient quality and length of sleep supports brain resilience over time. So how do you know if you're getting enough? If you naturally wake up at the same time on weekends that you have to during the week, you probably are. If you need to lie-in or take long naps, you're probably not.

Try practicing mindfulness or *yoga nidra* before bed at night, a guided breath-based meditation that has been shown in studies to improve [sleep quality](#). There are plenty of recordings online if you want to experience it.

Pick any of the above that work for you and build it up until it becomes a habit, then move onto the next one and so on. You might find that by the end of the year, you'll feel even healthier, more energized, and motivated than you do now, even as you turn another year older.



News and Notes



Sunday June 20, M. G. Satchidananda will lead the weekly Satsang meeting of Kriya Yoga initiates on Zoom. 12.30 GMT+1 (14.30 Central European Time; 8:30 am Montreal) duration: 90 minutes. If you are not already enrolled for these regular meetings, you will need to enroll at least 24 hours in advance. For details: <https://kriyayogasangha.org/babajis-kriya-yoga-online-satsang/>

Quebec Ashram initiation seminars in 2021 with M. G. Satchidananda.

1st initiation: September 3-5 (English), 2nd initiation: October 1-3; 3rd initiation: October 8-17.

New MP3 Versions of our 3 Albums. We have now created MP3 versions of our 3 Albums: 'OM Kriya Babaji Stuti Manjari', 'Devotional Songs and Chants from the Kriya Yoga Tradition', and 'Awakening from the Dream'. Once you purchase them, you will have instant access to them through Gumroad.com and will be able to listen to them on your Phone, Tablet, PC or other devices. <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/email/bky-monthly-promo/english/bky-mp3-audio.html>

India: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/email/bky-monthly-promo/indian/bky-mp3-audio.html>

Video Interview with M. G. Satchidananda. View his entire 45 minute interview for *The Grand Self Movie*, including questions and answers on the light body, the Sidha's teachings on transformation of all five bodies. <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/email/bky-monthly-promo/english/bky-grand-self-movie-satchidananda-interview.html>

"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.

In Europe for initiates: Sunday Satsang. 12.00 GMT +1 (14.00 Central European Time) duration: 60 to 90 minutes.

Daily Satsang – Babaji's Kriya Yoga Sri Lanka: Every day (Monday to Saturday) 5 p.m. India Standard Time (12.30 to 13.30 GMT +1). For details: <https://kriyayogasangha.org/babajis-kriya-yoga-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=UnFVW-mdSZC9PK0JoN0xPTGMxd3pSQT09>

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-info-text-suday.pdf>

Continued on Page 11

COVID-19 and Initiation Seminars in Babaji's Kriya Yoga. As authorities in many countries are now relaxing conditions which have been designed to restrict the movement and assembly of persons, and as the risk of infection from the COVID 19 continues to be very high, the Board of Directors recommends physical "social distancing" as a corollary to the very first yama or social restraint: ahimsa, to do no harm. We recognize that conditions vary widely between various countries and even cities. However, the virus does not care in what country or city you are in. It has consistently demonstrated itself to be more dangerous than expected. Studies confirm that 'aerosols' exhaled by normal breathing, and not just only small droplets expelled by a cough or sneeze, contribute to spreading the virus in rooms (unlike outdoors). Consequently, one person in a closed room or airplane can quickly infect dozens of other persons within a few minutes, irrespective of governments lifting the restrictions due to economic pressure.



The Yoga Toolbox: An Everyday Guide to Shaping Your Future, by Durga Ahlund. 234 pages, 7 by 9.5 inches, with over 200 black and white photographs. Price: USD\$22.00, CAD\$21.50 in Canada (inc gst). This great book offers lessons in using simple tools to live a long, healthy and happy life. It is also written for those who wish to develop their understanding of Yoga and Meditation. Yoga and meditation can bring relief and

promote healing from the effects of stress and bad habits on the physical body, the emotions and the mind. Each of the sixteen chapters focuses on a different specific objective that will facilitate shaping your future. https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#yoga_toolbox

Enlightenment: It's Not What You Think reveals how you can replace the perspective of the ego – the habit of identifying with the body, emotions, and thoughts – with a new perspective: the Witness, that of your soul ... pure consciousness. With compelling logic, practices for everyday life, and guided meditations, the book explains how you can free yourself from suffering, enjoy inner peace, and find intuitive guidance. The essays in this book explore the descriptions of enlightenment in various spiritual and wisdom traditions, the process of becoming enlightened, and how to overcome the inner obstacles to the achievement of that goal. 192 pages 6 x 9 inches, softcover June 2016. Price: USD\$16.00, CAD\$14.96 in Canada (inc gst).

"With this work, *Enlightenment*, Govindan delivers the gifts of siddha masters to our doorsteps. Here, he delineates succinctly and clearly the time-tested techniques of these

masters for eliminating obstacles—our deepest afflictions of fear, doubt, and all forms of grief and sorrow which obstruct the incessant flow of our intrinsic luminosity and happiness. *Enlightenment* is a must-read, for it is practical, simple, and meaningful... It is a decisive tool we can use for finding life's purpose." –

Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, Ph.D;

Spiritual Head, Himalayan Institute; Teacher, author, humanitarian, and visionary spiritual leader.

https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#enlightenment_book

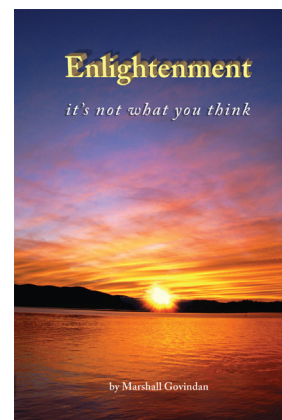
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Subscribe to the correspondence course, The Grace of Babaji's Kriya Yoga. We invite you to join us in this adventure of Self-exploration and discovery, drawn from the books dictated by Babaji in 1952 and 1953. Receive by mail, each month, a lesson of 18-24 pages developing a specific theme, with practical exercises. For details go here: http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#grace_course

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