

B a b a j i ' s

Kriya Yoga Journal

Disinformation, Distrust, Discernment and Dharma

By M. G. Satchidananda

During the past decade, social media platforms have disseminated disinformation at an accelerating rate. To a much less extent, legacy media or mainstream sources of news have also, knowingly or unknowingly. Consequently, many persons have fallen into the trap of distrusting legacy media. The traditional approach to producing news and information according to high standards of journalism has too often been compromised. The challenge is how to discern current events and to fulfil our social responsibilities.

While the ultimate responsibility for this situation is born by the news consumer, it is helpful to understand why so many, like the consumers of

fast food, allow themselves to be influenced. In both instances, it's easy to find, it's inexpensive, it is loaded with bias towards what we like, it avoids what we don't like, its producers seek to exploit our ignorance for their own self-interest, and it becomes habitual.

The explosion of conspiracy theories, growing social division, dismissal of legacy media and the rise of populism and autocrats are among the most obvious consequences.

This article begins where my article "Populist Politics and Our Duty as Yoga Sadhaks," Kriya Yoga Journal, Spring 2017, volume 24, no.1, ends and therefore before continuing further I request the reader to read it first

here: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/flexpaper-ui/journal-spring-17-art.php>

As the situation has deteriorated so much since then, it bears repeating here at least the first three of the nine duties in which Yoga sadhaks must engage to protect dharma:

"I believe that today it is the duty of Yoga sadhaks to observe the yamas (social restraints) of ahimsa (non-harming), satya (truthfulness), and aparigraha (greedlessness) in their relationships and as members of the body politic. Further, sadhaks have a duty to support directly or indirectly those who are doing the difficult work of reporting satya (the truth) through investigative journalism and to support their elected representatives. A Yoga sadhak can exercise this duty in many ways."

1. A Yoga sadhak should develop media literacy, which is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media. It can help us develop the skills of critical thinking, understand how media messages shape our culture and society, evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, skills, beliefs, and values, and recognize bias, spin, misinformation, and lies.

2. A Yoga sadhak must seek out the facts related to important issues as presented by media sources that

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exercise high professional standards of journalism and reflect on them in the light of the wisdom of Yoga before forming judgments.

3. *A Yoga sadhak should subscribe to news outlets that adhere to high standards of professional journalism. To conduct investigative journalism, which checks the pronouncements of politicians, news outlets need the support of engaged citizens, especially now as traditional print newspapers and magazines struggle to survive the loss of advertising revenue."*

The paradox of conspiracy theories

How paradoxical is it that no one will believe that they themselves believe in a "conspiracy theory"! Yet they exist with highly destructive consequences for all of us. A conspiracy theory can be defined as a theory that rejects the standard explanation for an event and instead credits a covert group or organization with carrying out a secret plot. Rumors, and their distinctive subtype, conspiracy theories, appear when a previous world order is turned on its head and former reference points lose their validity or cogency, triggering new collective explanations. Rumors arise as a coping mechanism for the population at risk and are powerful because they help with feelings of anger, fear, sadness and helplessness or anxiety. The greater the emotional response and impact the more likely that people will seek to reframe the issue so that it comfortably fits into their world view, even when presented with facts to the contrary.

Conspiracy theories, on the other hand, seek to create these negative emotions in the news consumer to aggravate the relationship between the public and the traditional power structures. Conspiracy theories seek to create mistrust of established authority and power. All institutions and individuals associated with "the system" are suspects: politicians, media, experts, scientists, healthcare institutions, pharmaceutical companies, and doctors. Such claims take advantage of widespread ignorance of how science arrives at facts, what constitutes high standards of journalism, as well as a contagion of fear that our institutions which support science and high standards of journalism, are themselves corrupted.

I am dismayed to hear that even students of Yoga espouse claims that COVID-19 is a "scam-demic," or a "hoax," promoted by elites for their own nefarious purposes. Conspiracy theories, like a virus itself usually mutate. Among those related to COVID-19 are that it has its origins with Bill Gates, a Chinese military lab, the US Military, 5G networks, and even that it does not really exist! Other conspiracy theories include a "global warming hoax," a shadowy "Deep State," the attacks on 9.11.2001, the assassination of President Kennedy, chemtrails, U.S. government cover-ups of flying saucers and extra-terrestrials, antisemitism, Free Masonry, the Illuminati, and the Anti-Christ. Radical terrorist groups justify their actions with the belief that "If I don't destroy them, they will destroy me," with no rational examination. Anti-vaxxers believe vaccination causes autism in children despite no scientific evidence to the

contrary. They also believe that the government will force people to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

In his book *Mass Paranoia*, Peter Kreko writes: "In times of economic, political and social crisis, the temptation to fall back on conspiracy theories to rationalize the unexpected is especially high. I would suggest three underlying reasons for this: a sense of losing control, the information and knowledge vacuum, and anxiety triggered by negative events. When people feel they cannot influence happenings that pose a threat to their daily lives, they may try to recreate an illusion of control by overzealously seeking explanations. Extraordinary events require extraordinary interpretations that reach beyond traditional and official narratives. Further, in historical times riddled with frustration and uncertainty, the need to identify an enemy or culprit can be overwhelming." (Note 1)

The big lie

Another source of disinformation is sometimes referred to as the "big lie," which occurs when its exponents flood social media repeatedly and incessantly with falsehoods, in the belief that if it is repeated as factual enough times, many people will come to believe it.

Related to this is what is referred to as "magical thinking." President Trump has displayed this ever since the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, whenever he has expressed the opinion that "it will go away very soon," even qualifying this claim with the words "like magic," or "I hope," while also stating plainly "I am not responsible" for the government's response to it. His lifelong belief in the power of positive thinking, New Thought and "chaos magick", has been well documented. Trump believes, "Anything can change, without warning, and that's why I try not to take any of what's happening too seriously." (Note 2)

As a result, the very institutions which enable us to realize our individual and collective dharma are all seriously threatened today by populist and authoritarian leaders. The threat is amplified by those who have replaced the practice of discernment with distrust of expertise and cynicism.

Dharma can be defined as purposeful social order, and in Classical Yoga, referred to as the yamas, the social restraints, and has as its purpose the realization of human potential and the avoidance of suffering born of human nature. The five social restraints are:

1. Ahimsa: non-harming; and its positive expression as kindness;
2. Satya: the search for and expression of truth; not lying;
3. Asteya: not stealing;
4. Brahmacharya: chastity;
5. Aparigraha: greedlessness.

In a broader sense, dharma is defined as the eternal and inherent nature of reality, a cosmic law underlying right behavior and social order.

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Disinformation *continued*

It has amazed me to hear how some students, and even teachers of Yoga, ignore the above restraints when they claim to be so “super healthy” and “fearless” that they can ignore the restraints of social distancing and hygienic precautions in their Yoga studios, as required in the face of the pandemic. They ignore how they may infect others as asymptomatic carriers of the virus. They completely discount the value of others who may not be as healthy as they purport to be. This is probably due to an unfamiliarity with critical thinking, political debate, and virology. This is probably also compounded by a need to denigrate medical science as a means of promoting their own preferred forms of alternative medicine or indeed alternate reality.

The need for discernment

Discernment, or viveka, is the principle means by which dharma can be protected. It requires one to seek truth. It is a response to ignorance, to not knowing, and it requires effort. Science, principled journalism, and authentic Yoga share as their objective, the discovery or realization of truth. Science refers to it as fact and arrives at it through a long process of trial and error, observation, recording and comparison. Journalism arrives at it by following certain principles. Furthermore, journalists are trained to be skeptical. Yoga refers to it as wisdom, or jnana, and attributes one's own experience as its highest authority, and the traditional textual sources as secondary sources for comparison. This distinguishes it from religion, which claims that particular scriptures are the highest source of authority and truth. Classical Yoga asserts that only through “kriya yoga, consisting of intense continuous practice, self-study and surrender of the perspective of the ego, can one arrive at “Self-realization,” known as samadhi.

Yoga requires that each of us seek to fulfil our sva-dharma, or personal “self” purpose: which include our responsibilities, whatever our situation, context, status in life, as a member of a family, a citizen, a leader, a professional, as well as those of our soul, Self-realization. As citizens, each of us has a civic responsibility to protect a social order which has as its purpose the protection and fulfillment of the needs and potential of all members of society. These needs include their health, safety, education, the pursuit of justice, and the advancement of human rights. This responsibility requires that citizens ensure that they are well informed so that they can elect representatives who will research, articulate, and debate political issues in furtherance of society's evolving needs. To exercise this civic responsibility, citizens must subscribe to trustworthy sources of news and information, which can help them to hold their elected representatives accountable. Trustworthy sources of news and information requires high standards of journalism, both inside and outside of traditional legacy media.

What is journalism?

“Journalism is ‘a report of what is going on’ (note 3) in

the community with which one identifies but outside the scope of individual experience: what happens in a place where you are not, at a time when you are doing something else.... Journalism is essential to democracy because it creates a sense of shared reality across a city, a state, a nation. Without this shared reality, a public sphere, - the term philosopher Jurgen Habermas uses to describe the space where public opinion takes shape - cannot exist.” (note 4). This presupposes the presence of an intent to create a public sphere of common understanding, something that could be argued, is no longer pursued unless it's during the coverage of phenomenal events such as natural disasters, election night results, the death of a head of state, or other calamity.

A media literate person discerns sources of information which apply such high standards of journalism from those which do not. One of the standards of high quality journalism is neutrality, which usually means “without assigning value or providing more than immediate context” and this “translates into enforced restraint in language and tone.... the hallmarks of objectivity” (note 5). This is in contrast to articles written by opinion columnists or editorials or social media pieces whose purpose is to entertain, or which seeks to change the listener's or reader's opinion. Sadly, all mainstream media today have either an explicit or implicit bias in their coverage hence the importance of not limiting one's media sources to only one outlet but to survey all of them, domestically and internationally, with a view to discerning the news being followed.

Another high standard of journalism is to confirm a purported fact from at least 2 verifiable and reputable sources. Editors apply their judgment in good faith to discern assertions which cannot be supported. They also have a responsibility to publish retractions when errors in reporting are made. Legacy media can be valuable when it makes the effort to apply such a standard.

Social media sources of news including Facebook, Google, Bing and Apple are not constrained by standards of journalism.

Their objective is to maximize the value of their stock for their shareholders. While they usually borrow news reported by legacy media, Facebook, in particular, has strayed from neutrality in its reporting because of overt political pressure by authoritarian figures.

“Facebook has constrained its efforts against false and misleading news, adopted a policy explicitly allowing politicians to lie, and even altered its news feed algorithm to neutralize claims that it was biased against conservative publishers, according to more than a dozen former and current employees and previously unreported documents obtained by The Washington Post... And as Trump grew in power, the fear of his wrath pushed Facebook into more deferential behavior toward its growing number of right-leaning users, tilting the balance of news people see on the network, according to the current and former employees.” (Note 6)

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Do you continue to decide what news you receive? Are you willing to pay for it?

Furthermore, since then, social media giants such as Facebook and Google have obtained much more data on your biases and preferences and developed their algorithms to decide what “news” to present to someone with reference to these biases and preferences. As I discussed in the Kriya Yoga Journal, Summer, 2018, part 2 of the three part series of articles, entitled, “Absolute Freedom in the Post Humanist World”, humans are ceding their freedom of decision making to entities which know them better than they know themselves, using “big data,” and computer-driven algorithms. (Note 7)

<https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/flexpaper-ui/journal-summer-18-art.php>

By consuming news from such social media giants, rather than from legacy media sources, you are allowing yourself to be manipulated by them into what news you read. Consequently, one can argue that you neglect your responsibility to protect social order, or dharma, the greater good of all, from autocrats and their agents who seek to subvert it for their own ends.

On the other hand, by paying for subscriptions to legacy media, you help them to fulfil their primary responsibilities in reporting news and investigative journalism, and to survive as viable business enterprises in competition with social media giants. You also help them to resist the political and financial pressures which can and do compromise the integrity of their reporting.

How to maintain neutrality in reporting news while surviving the assault by autocrats who lie.

The public's right to know, and its corollary, to be able to hold their elected officials accountable, has been severely limited by the journalism's standard of only reporting on empirically proven facts for which only logical, intellectual evidence can be summoned. (Note 8)

Journalists need to recognize that trying to remain “neutral” is a political statement and must be replaced when the subject of their reporting involves evidence of lying, which is defined expressing a falsehood with the intent to deceive. While politicians often speak half-truths, if they continue to repeat falsehoods, journalists can and must assume that there is an intent to deceive, and therefore, report it as “lying. Otherwise, journalists are complicit in politicians' efforts to deceive, and they neutralize the public's right to know and hold politicians accountable. (Note 9).

Journalists will have to acknowledge that the media is inherently a political actor and their choice of words are political decisions, and to make these decisions, accept responsibility for shaping and facilitating the political conversations that citizens must have in a democracy.

Political speech, why dharma is threatened and how to fulfil our duty to protect it

Political speech is that which brings reality into focus

and activates the imagination, with the intention of finding common ground across differences and to negotiate the rules of living together in society.

It is worth repeating what I wrote in the Spring 2017 issue of the Kriya Journal:

“Dharma, purposeful social order, is threatened by these accelerating forces of change, the frustration with the gridlocked political system's inability to resolve problems, and the risk that populist movements will do no more than inflame the body politic with anger, hatred, conspiracy theories, xenophobia, bigotry, racism, misogyny, and appeals to religious sectarianism. What can a citizen do to reform and protect the institutions that guarantee civil rights, a free and independent press, and representative democracy? What can one person do to prevent populism from leading to the abuse of power by elected officials?” (Note 10).

Continue reading that article at the link below for eight additional ways that a Yoga sadhak can exercise this duty.

Autocratic power requires the degradation of moral authority, not by the assertion of the right to judge good and evil, but the defeat of moral principles as such. It does so by cynicism, and by ridicule of those who seek to express ideals, vision, and moral aspiration. In this period of moral relativism, where the means justifies the ends, and even respect for the word “morality” has been lost, autocrats around the world are overcoming the precious institutions which contribute so much to human development: a free press, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and a fair system of justice.

Moral aspiration forms the foundation of these institutions. Its expression will need to be reinvented to overcome the pervasive cynicism of this era. It will require new leaders who can express compelling arguments for moral aspiration. By their example, and by their wisdom and experience in overcoming the limitations of human nature, moral leaders can and must come forward and speak the language of vision of what could be, focusing on dignity, instead of power, equality instead of wealth, and solidarity instead of competition.

Notes

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2: Lachman, Gary, Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump, 2018, Penguin Random House. Pages xiv-xv, 74-78.

3: Rosen, Jay, “The Awayness Problem,” Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 2013. https://archives.cjr.org/cover_story/the_awayness_problem.php

4: Gesser, Masha, Surviving Autocracy, 2020, Riverhead Books, page 112

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Continued on Page 5

Books, pg 124.

6: "Zuckerberg once wanted to sanction Trump. Then Facebook wrote rules that accommodated him," Washington Post, June 28, 2020.

7: "Absolute Freedom in the Post Humanist World", Kriya Yoga Journal, Summer, 2018, volume 25, no 2. <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/flexpaper-ui/journal-summer-18-art.php>

8: Gesser, Masha, Surviving Autocracy, 2020, Riverhead

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9: Gesser, Masha, Surviving Autocracy, 2020, Riverhead Books, page 127

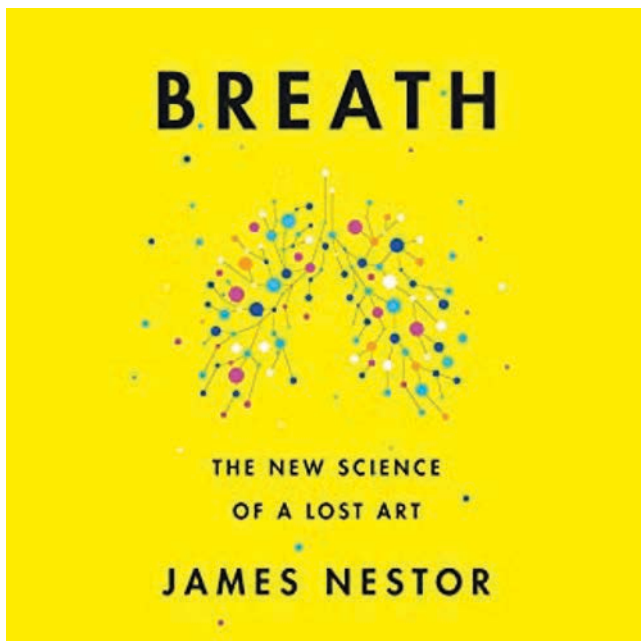
10: "Populist Politics and Our Duty as Yoga Sadhaks," Kriya Yoga Journal, Spring 2017, volume 24, no. 1. <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/flexpaper-ui/journal-spring-17-art.php>

Achieving Health and Longevity from Kriya Yoga Pranayama Practice

By Durga Ahlund

*I have known the Lord from days bygone
Doubt-tossed are they;
The Lord is the Light
In my fleshy body as Prana pulsates
If I know Him not, who else will?
-Thirumandiram, Verse no. 1797*

This verse has stuck with me over the decades. I return to it again and again. It has led me on my path of Yoga and cemented my dedicated practice of pranayama and meditation. However, it was a relatively new book, a New York Times Best Seller, called *Breath, The New Science of a Lost Art*, by James Nestor, that encourages me to write this rather personal article. The book is wonderful read because I think it has tremendous potential. It encourages everyone to become aware of and retrain the way they breathe in order to improve their physical and mental health. But, also, conscious breathing has the potential to help a critical mass discover within their very own breath, an experience of peace and meaning, as powerful as one is ever going to get!



The consciousness that lies within everything, both animate and inanimate is where I go, each time I meditate.

I feel Its movement in nature, in the wind and trees and in large bodies of open water. In the Himalayas it literally whispers its secrets. It is equally there in every movement as I meditate on the breath. I am a slow and steady absorber, but still I can't grasp the consciousness in the inanimate, in that which does not breathe. So, I was particularly pleased and delighted by one Chapter in this book on evolution that shed some light for me. It is in the chapter called, "Fast, Slow and Not at All". I was intrigued with the discussion on pages 192-194, of the work of a Hungarian Scientist, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1937.

Szent-Gyorgyi moved to the USA and lead a research laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts where he researched cellular respiration and eventually headed up the National Foundation for Cancer Research. I quote extensively here, for on the question of what distinguishes animate from inanimate life, what distinguishes a from a rock, from a tree, from me. Szent-Gyorgyi said differences lies in, "the energy or the excitability of electrons within the atoms that make up the molecules in matter." He found that "the more easily and often electrons can be transferred between molecules, the more desaturated matter becomes, the more alive it is." He said, "the living state is such an electronically desaturated state". "Nature is simple but subtle." It is suggested that electrons take an active part in the stability and homeostasis in the body.

His in depth, 1940's study of earliest life forms on Earth led to his deduction that they were made up of weak electron acceptors, which meant they couldn't easily take in or release electrons. And as the early forms of matter had less energy, they had less chance to evolve over the millions and millions of years". It wasn't until small creatures called prokaryotes formed, which fed on carbon compounds on the surface of the oceans and then cyanobacteria began to utilize water in photosynthesis that oxygen levels rose over earth, as a byproduct. Oxygen, being a strong acceptor of electrons encouraged the evolution of other oxygen



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consuming organisms. As these organisms attracted and exchanged many more electrons with older anerobic life (that which has zero or a near zero content of oxygen), this new surplus of energy, allowed early life to evolve more quickly into plants, insects and other life forms.

Being able to absorb and transfer electrons in a controlled way allows living matter to remain healthy.

"The more oxygen life can consume, the more electron excitability it gains, the more animated it becomes. It is when cells lose the ability to offload and absorb electrons, they begin to break down." "The loss of electron exchange irreversibly means killing," wrote Szent-Gyorgyi. "The breakdown of electron excitability is what causes metal to rust and leaves to turn brown and die. Within the human body as cells lose the ability to attract oxygen," Szent-Gyorgyi wrote, "electrons within them will slow and stop freely interchanging with other cells, resulting in unregulated and abnormal growth. Cancer develops and thrives in environments of low oxygen."

"The best way to keep tissues in the body healthy is to mimic the reactions that evolved in early aerobic life on Earth-specifically, to feed the body with a constant presence of that strong electron acceptor, oxygen," says Szent-Gyorgyi. We all know the importance of ample oxygen. What is new information for most people is that it is by **breathing slow, breathing less and through the nose** that we balance levels of respiratory gases in the body, assuring the **maximum amount of oxygen** to the **maximum amount of tissues**, so that our cells have the **maximum amount of electron reactivity**. One should breathe according to energy requirements and not more than 12 cycles of breath per minute, otherwise carbon dioxide levels will decrease, which reduces the amount of oxygen attracted to the cells and negatively affects blood pH levels. Oxygen is not well and readily absorbed by taking large gulps of breaths through the mouth.

Science tells us that longer thinner breaths through the nose allow the lungs to soak up more oxygen in fewer breaths. Breathing fewer, slower breaths, 10 or less per minute, increases the carbon dioxide in the blood, which stimulates more oxygen to infuse the tissues and enriches the blood with red blood cells. The blood carries more oxygen and produces more energy with each breath. A slow and steady rhythmic breath allows us to thrive by breathing less.

"In every culture and in every medical tradition before ours, healing was accomplished by moving energy. The moving energy of electrons allows living things to stay alive and healthy for as long as possible. The names may have changed prana, chi, holy spirit but the principle has remained the same," says Szent-Gyorgyi. What is intriguing for me, is to consider the possibility that the movement involved in **electron excitability and acceptability** reflects what we in Yoga refer to as the prana vayus or "motive powers." In yogic terminology of the siddhas, it is pranagni, the fire of prana, the intelligence that works in the lungs and heart that converts oxygen into an internal

force of vitality.

Vayus, the motive powers of prana

Ancient writings of Yoga describe Prana as a unifying energy field, an animating force, which permeates the whole atmosphere and is inhaled with every breath. Oxygen is the gaseous medium through which prana is drawn into the body, but prana is not oxygen. Prana is likened to a charged particle that can be affected internally by the mind and externally by electric, magnetic or electromagnetic fields. This pranic field accounts for the interrelatedness of the world of appearances.

The word vayu comes from root "va" which means to move. Tantra defines vayu as a motive power. Vayu also means wind or air current. Vayus are the motive powers of prana. Any motion in any of the vayu centers will immediately affect a certain part of the body, so it is important to understand the vayus and where they are located and what they affect. There are five major prana vayus that carry on major functioning in the body. There are an additional five classified as minor prana vayus, but they are modifications of the major five. The vayus or air currents exist both in the physical and subtle bodies, functioning through the body, mind and senses. The major vayus are known as prana, apana, samana, vyana and udana. Prana is inward moving, and our positive propulsive energy in life, our ability to move and to develop and the prevalent element is air. Apana is outward moving and the capacity to withdraw and to eliminate things from ourselves. The prevalent element is earth. Samana is involved in digestion and assimilating of prana and food and regulates inward moving and outward moving energy. It controls the ability to balance, hold and contract. Vyana is circulation of energy that controls the capacity for muscular movement (voluntary and involuntary) and self-expression. Udana is the energy of the head and throat and controls our ability to ascend, rise up and grow. It takes us into higher states. It stops the inner and outer flow of energy as the mind rises into higher states of consciousness or into death. Balance in the five forces creates balance in the system. We can bring more balance in our prana vayus with asana and pranayama, but also by grounding, connecting with earth energies by lying, sitting, walking barefoot in grass, on a beach, wading in the ocean, swimming in clear water lakes.

Conscious breathing is the key to physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

The breath is life and yet most people don't think about the importance of breathing. They don't think about respiration, much less the subtle elements of the breath. When the breath is rhythmic, slow and deep we feel calm, energetic and alert. But this optimal breathing pattern is not the norm for the majority of people living on this stressful planet. Life pressures distract us, frustrate us, frighten us, exhaust us. Our autonomic nervous system gets out of balance and we become more driven by the sympathetic than

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the parasympathetic nervous system. A twice daily practice of Kriya Kundalini pranayama helps us establish rhythmic, slow breathing throughout the day, and helps to keep the restless mind and its waves in check. The rhythm of the breath, or lack of it, will create corresponding sensations in different parts of the body and affect the mind. Everything is linked. When the breath is taken in through the mouth, or is too big, too fast, irregular, shallow, or if there is poor use of respiratory muscles there will be negative consequences for health and mental wellbeing. It is through slow, calm and rhythmic breathing that the body, mind and emotions become more integrated, more harmonious.

While Prana has not been measured by scientific examination, an energetic factor in the atmosphere, an invisible, universe-wide energy field that gives mass to all matter is of great interest. In addition, prana and electrons have overlapping gross and subtle properties. Prana's vital influence on the health of living organisms has long been the subject of study in Yoga and Ayurveda. Recently there has been an uptick in the study and research on electrons and their role in the health of individuals.

According to medical science there are important criteria required for proper healthy breathing. The first criteria is to breathe through the nose, not the mouth. While this may seem obvious, many people are mouth breathers. It is common for people to breathe through the mouth at night or when distressed in order to get bigger gulps of air or due to congestion, allergies or anatomical obstructions like a deviated septum. But, nasal breathing increases strength and stamina, lowers the pulse rate, reduces stress, increases a sense of harmony and promotes faster muscle and energy recovery after intense workouts. The nostrils are for breathing as they contain hairs that warm the breath and moisten and filter the air.

We breathe mostly through one nostril at a time. Nostrils are made up of erectile vasodilating tissues that increase and decrease so that air flows alternately between the two nasal cavities. After a certain amount of time, or due to circumstances, such as changes in temperature, mood or activity, nostril tissues naturally vasoconstrict or vasodilate, and in so doing, change dominance in the flow of air. The alternating nostril flow/dominance affects the autonomic nervous system and hemispheres of the brain differently. Right nostril dominance lends itself to sympathetic nervous system activity (physical-readies for action-fight or flight) and influences, the right side of the body, left brain activity (logic, language, computation) and subtly the pingala nadi. Left nostril dominance lends itself to parasympathetic (digestion and restoration) and influences the left side of the body and right brain hemisphere activities (creativity and artistry) and subtly, the ida nadi. There is a transition point when both nostrils are flowing, but normally this is only for a few minutes as nostril dominance shifts. Advanced yogis have discovered more intense pranayama and techniques of svara yoga, which encourages the breath to flow through both nostrils simultaneously. This is a form of sushumna channel breathing

that can last for an extended length of time to establish one in deepest meditation. Normally alternating dominate nasal breathing is important for the health of body and mind.

In addition, there is a role that nasal breathing plays in increasing nitric oxide in the sinuses. Nitric oxide is a molecule that is important for blood vessel health. It is a vasodilator, which relaxes the muscles of the vessels, widening them to increase blood flow. This allows for better circulation and distribution of oxygen into the cells. Circulation, immune function, and even mood can be positively altered by the amount of nitric oxide in the body. Regular practice of the asana and pranayama will effectively increase nitric oxide.

The second criteria of healthy breathing is to breathe slowly and deeply in order to take fewer breaths per minute. Breathing deep does not mean big. In Kriya Yoga pranayama we use yogic breathing, 3-part breathing, so that we regularly utilize all the muscles of respiration: abdominal, intercostal and clavicular. We inhale slowly and deeply using the diaphragm to fill the belly, expand the chest and then continue to draw breath into the head, using the clavicular muscles. This slow, deep inhalation ensures that we fill the entire lung. The slow, even exhalation gives time for the gaseous exchange required for oxygen to reach all the tissues. Yogic breathing encourages the elongations of both the inhalation and exhalation.

James Nestor's research suggested that optimal breath is a 5.5 second inhalation followed by a 5.5 second exhalation. Six breaths per minute was found to be most efficient for reducing blood pressure and heart rate. Yet, Nestor's cited research goes further to show the vitalizing and potential health benefits of extending the exhalation, so that it is much longer than the inhalation. In our practice of Kriya Kundalini Pranayama, we have discovered for ourselves the value of this extended exhalation. Exhalation control can be transformational. We know how deeply they settle us into deep relaxation and widen consciousness, but Nestor's research reverberates also what we have been saying about this pranayama, that it retrains our normal breathing pattern bringing about health and physical wellbeing. The prolongation of the exhalation offers huge physical benefits as we will see below.

The secret criteria is circular breathing

And finally, I want to drop here the last big secret in the optimal pranayama for vitality and longevity and transformation and that is the **harmonizing of the breath by removing the pause between the inhalation and exhalation.** The secret ingredient is a circular breath, the top of each inhalation flows into exhalation and from the bottom of the exhalation, the next inhalation arises. There is no end to the breath, no pause or retention.

What is respiration?

According to scientist, Christian Bohr (University of Co-

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penhagen 1930s), "It (respiration) is supply on demand at a molecular level." Oxygen is the fuel for the cells and hemoglobin transports oxygen to the cells and carbon dioxide is released from the cells. But what makes this exchange happen? As you inhale, the diaphragm and intercostal muscles contract creating negative pressure in the chest cavity that draws air into the lungs and blood into the heart. When you exhale blood is forced into the body and lungs where it recirculates. Carbon dioxide is what separates oxygen from the blood allowing it to penetrate the cells. Efficient respiration requires that we lengthen inhalations filling the lungs with air and lengthening exhalations to maintain the normal range of carbon dioxide in our bloodstream, which increases the exchange of oxygen in tissues and organs. We do not benefit from taking large amounts of air through the mouth and quickly exhaling. What we need is slower, deeper inhalations through the nose and longer more conscious exhalations. For in addition to oxygen, carbon dioxide is vital to respiration as it attracts more oxygen. Why do some cells get more oxygen than others? Science tells us that muscles that are being stretched and contracted produce more carbon dioxide, which in turn attracts more oxygen.

Yandell Henderson, a leading respiration physiologist in the 1930s, and director of the Laboratory of Applied Physiology at Yale University studied respiration and metabolism and the role of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is a waste product generated from the process of metabolism of carbohydrates, fats and amino acids into energy, ATP. Excessive Co₂ is expelled through exhalations. However, Co₂ plays a variety of roles in the human body. It regulates pH of the blood, stimulates breathing and influences the attraction hemoglobin has for oxygen. Fluctuations in carbon dioxide can cause disturbances if normal levels are not maintained. Henderson's quite awful and painful research on dogs provided evidence that oxygen alone without carbon dioxide to offload it into the cells is simply exhaled out. He proved that the amount of carbon dioxide flowing through the blood stream helps the oxygen get to the muscles, tissues and organs. *Breath*, P. 76-78.

Breathing is more than just a biochemical or physical act; it more than just moving the diaphragm downward and drawing in air to feed cells and remove wastes. Respiration influences every internal organ, telling them to turn on and off. These molecules affect heart rate, digestion, moods, attitudes, when we feel aroused and when we feel mellow or nauseous. Breathing is a power switch to a vast network of the autonomic nervous system, that includes the vagus nerve which contributes to the autonomic nervous system. Conscious breathing opens communication along the vagal network relaxing us within the response of the parasympathetic nervous system.

A most important health aspect of pranayama is that it improves cell respiration as it slows and deepens breathing. It is a means of exercising internal and external pressures in the lungs and body. It also stimulates the central nervous system and body and senses. This ultimately allows us to have more control over our breathing, over

our emotions and our health.

There are misconceptions that pranayama increases the amount of oxygen content into the respiratory system and the blood.

What occurs as one practices daily pranayama over an extended period of time, is that the oxygen content is reduced and the concentration of carbon dioxide increases in the blood. While that sounds counter-productive what is actually happening is that pranayama is training the cells in the body to work more efficiently. While untrained cells do get dull with increased carbon dioxide, trained cells, due to pranayama will work more effectively with less demand for oxygen. Pranayama practice will increase the efficiency of the cells by reducing the BMR, the basal metabolism rate. The BMR is the exchange of energy needed to carry out basic functioning in the body. It is the number of calories your body burns at rest to maintain normal body functions. This rate is almost directly proportional to the rate of breathing. When we sleep really well, we will reduce the BMR by about 9% in five hours. The breathing rate will also be reduced during sleep. By slowing down the breath we are provided deep rest for the body and mind. With less energy expenditure we can produce more energy. We can become efficient and also conserve more energy. We find that with a twice daily pranayama scheduled practice, we are less hungry and have more energy, mental clarity and enthusiasm. We become less restless, calm, more dynamic.

James Nestor discusses it this way. Slower and longer exhalations mean we have higher carbon dioxide levels. "What happens is that bonus of carbon dioxide is that we gain a higher aerobic endurance. This measure of highest oxygen consumption called the VO₂ max is the best gauge of cardiovascular fitness." Training the body to breathe less actually increases the VO₂ max, which boosts athletic stamina but also helps us live longer and healthier lives.

The term pranayama suggests "mastery of the breath."

Prana means energy, and ayama is a composite of two words meaning to "stretch like a bow." It means development and extension. Pranayama is a process of gathering energy together and directing it to remove blockages in the vital body. This process helps us to gain mastery over inner pranic forces, which helps us gain mastery over the body and mind.

While Kriya Kundalini Pranayama stimulates the movement of energy in the body, including oxygen and carbon dioxide, its focus is the prana vayus and nadis. It is not just deep breathing or about bringing more oxygen into the lungs. It extends and directs the vital energy through the subtle channels, ida, pingala and sushumna. It harmonizes breathing so that an inner source of prana/consciousness manifests. We experience that, as light, lightness, ascension, expansion, a pranic stream of purifying energy

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for body and mind. The daily practice will train the respiratory system to take slow, rhythmic breaths for 24 hours. Imbalances in the prana vayus show up in our daily lives as habitual poor breathing. Again, these are: shallowness of breath, irregular breathing, fast, or big breaths, breathing through the mouth, tendency to focus more on inhaling than on exhaling, a tendency to hold the breath, or to use respiratory muscles incorrectly (expanding the belly on exhalation, contracting the belly on inhalation-stimulating sympathetic charge). And, all of our various Kriya healing pranayama techniques work to purify the respiratory track and lungs and deepen and slow breathing to decrease the number of breaths per minute, and to help establish a healthy rhythm of inhalations and exhalations for all life activities.

Let us examine the various components of Kriya Kundalini Pranayama and how it encourages wellbeing.

We start with **ujjayi breath**, which is integral to our kriya kundalini pranayama techniques in Babaji's Kriya Yoga. The ujjayi sound is created as air flows through a restricted air passage. We are tightening our throats, as we take a breath. The glottis is partially closed off, as when you whisper or close your throat to hold a liquid in your mouth to gargle. The glottis is the aperture in the throat, just behind the larynx. If you partially close off the glottis by breathing deeply you create a sibilant 'ssss'. This sound is often compared to snoring, but it is not really a snore, there is no strong vibration of the soft palate, rather it more the sound of a baby sleeping. Any unevenness in the breath or unsteadiness of the glottis will be heard. Ujjayi is always practiced breathing both in and out through the nose with the mouth closed.

Ujjayi helps to regulate the motion of the lungs and quiets the nervous system and overcome derangements of the prana and can overcome physical and psychological obstacles that occur when prana is out of balance. Ujjayi changes the ratio of air to blood volume in the lungs. The volume of blood is greater than the volume of air in ujjayi. Inhalation and exhalation are prolonged and so the efficiency of gaseous exchange is increased. The breath increases internal pressure which stimulates circulation, metabolism, and suction of the venous blood. It helps us remains quite fresh and energetic all day.

During the asana, ujjayi is also highly recommended. The practice of ujjayi warms the body and relaxes tension in the muscles. It calms the mind and centers the senses on the hissing sound created in the throat. Ujjayi builds endurance and sets up a rhythm in the body, so that you will not go too far, too fast. Awareness gathers around the what is happening in the body and to the sensations in the spinal cord. Each subsequent breath allows you to move gently, deeper into the asana and into stillness.

The second component in Kriya Kundalini Pranayama is yogic breathing or 3-part breathing. We breathe deeply with tension in the throat. We try to make the sound smooth without pauses or jerks, but we also hold a slight tension in the lower abdomen so that there

is an expansion in the side and back of your body. The entire circumference of the torso expands with the inhalation. Yogic Breathing is a complete breath that requires a smooth control over the all the muscles used in respiration, the abdomen, the diaphragm, the intercostals, and the clavicular muscles. All are utilized during inhalation to expand the belly, the diaphragm and the chest with the intention to bring the breath all the way up into the head, and fill the lungs. The abdomen and accessory muscles of respiration are used during exhalation to contract the belly and empty stagnant air from the lungs. **The third component is that each inhalation should flow into the exhalation, without stops or even slight pauses.** We increase strength and heart rate as we elongate the inhalation, we decrease heart rate and increase relaxation when we elongate the exhalation. This smooth even breathing will create a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system. I have found that it takes only a few of these breaths in a stressful moment to relax my body and calm my mind and allow a shift in mood and perspective.

The sensations of inner heat and cold

In Kriya Yoga, we work with an understanding that the breath moves in the physical and subtle body. We understand and play with the agni, the fire of prana, in the belly, **in sita-ushna to consciously stimulate a physical reaction to the inhalations and exhalations.** Gathering the senses into our inner awareness, we take some control over body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and help influence the flow of brain chemicals that alter moods and emotions and sleep, as we directly influence the nadis and prana vayus. By taking conscious control over the inhalations and exhalations, we bring balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The increased circulation of blood and the richly infused blood is taken to the cells of the brain, the cranial and spinal nerves, the spinal cord, the endocrine glands and the digestive system.

Our kriya kundalini pranayama also critically utilizes intense visualization of the breath in the subtle channels to perfect the elongation of the exhalation. The mathematical formula of kanneda tahoopoo regulates the motion of the lungs and quiets both the nervous systems and the energy fields, which influences the body and mind. The use of bandhas, mantras, temperature, visualization, and devotion creates a remarkably synchronistic effect. All levels of one's being, physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual are drawn into each and every inhalation and exhalation affecting the whole at the deepest levels. Our whole being is invited to step into this work in such an integral way that it has the potential to produce perfection in the pranayama and in our breathing.

While reading this book *Breath*, inspired me to write this article praising the pranayama techniques to students of Babaji's Kriya Yoga. I believe that all the techniques of Babaji's Kriya Yoga support physical health and mental, emo-

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Health and Longevity *continued*

tional and of course most importantly spiritual wellbeing. They all promote movement and prevent stagnation. For it is not just energy we want for energy sake. It is being wide open, allowing the energy of life to flow through us unencumbered by the wants, desires, fears and aversions, which contract and constrict us. Just as our pranayama strengthens respiratory, circulatory, immune and nervous systems and purifies the subtle channels and chakras, so does the silent repetition of mantras, devotional chanting, singing aloud and deep meditation. We practice Babaji's Kriya Yoga to expand our consciousness, our compassion, our capacity to live more vibrant, healthy and longer lives in service to others. And, now, when I meditate, I don't try

to wrap my mind around the consciousness of inanimate objects. Does the mind gain freedom from knowing the consciousness of a rock or a grain of sand? It makes no difference whether it is an active life with lots of electron excitability or an extremely passive life with little electron excitability. I feel, I breathe, but everything is consciousness, everything is interconnected. My mind can wrap itself around what my heart absorbs. And when scientists hint at the same, I have to smile.

Reference: *Breath, The New Science of a Lost Art*, by James Nestor, Riverhead Books, New York 2020 ISBN: 9780593191354

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**. For more details and to view 9 minutes of sample segments go to: <https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore-gumroad.htm> "This is an earnest, unique and inspiring presentation, suitable for experienced beginners and intermediates." – Yoga Journal.

New. The Grand Self Movie has been released! We are all magnificent in our essence. Our limited beliefs have been covering up the Truth of who we really are. In this true story that inspires and entertains, featuring interview with many experts, including **Marshall Govindan**, this extraordinary feature length documentary film will elevate your consciousness. Filmed in 7 countries | 2020 | 121 minutes | created by multiple award-winning conscious filmmakers. It can be viewed here: view now or downloaded here: <https://www.grandselfmovie.com/a/33391/uLiv9v9V>



NEW INSPIRING FILM ...

NOW PLAYING!

FROM THE CREATORS OF,
WHAT IF? THE MOVIE

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. Therefore, it is not advisable to offer initiation seminars inside in person, until and unless conditions permit these to be given safely for everyone concerned and prevention or reliable treatment of severe cases is ensured and available to everyone. We are

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News and Notes *continued*

all challenged to act with a sense of responsibility for the health and economic well-being of everyone around us, not merely those pertaining to our own person. The teachings and sadhana of Babaji's Kriya Yoga to surrender the perspective of the ego can help us to meet this challenge.

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.

As the question has been raised of whether members of the Order can offer initiation online through any cyberspace communications, like Zoom, during the pandemic, the Board is in unanimous agreement that initiations into Babaji's Kriya Yoga must continue to be offered only in person, to ensure confidentiality, but that introductory lectures can be offered online to anyone.

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.*

Pilgrimage to the new Badrinath Ashram with M. G. Satchidananda and Durga Ahlund, September 17 to October 5, 2021: Join them in a life changing, unforgettable pilgrimage to the place where Babaji attained soruba samadhi, the ultimate state of enlightenment. Details are here: <http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/Pilgrimage-himalayas.htm>

The Practice of Integral Yoga, by J.K. Mukherjee, is now distributed by Kriya Yoga Publications: https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#integral_yoga_book

by Jugal Kishore Mukerjee, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Published in 2003. 366 pages. Price: USD\$16.90, CAD\$18.90 in Canada (inc gst). ISBN 81-7058-732-8. Softcover. 6 x 9 inches.

If you are inspired by the brilliance of the writings of Sri Aurobindo or your heart is called by The Mother and wish to understand in a nutshell how to practice their Integral Yoga, this is the one book you require!

If you want to experience in your body and mind what

it is to "call down Grace" into your life, this is the one book you require!

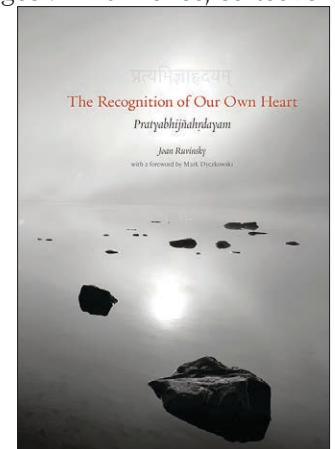
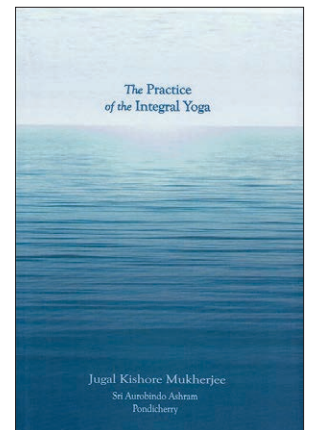
If you want to develop a clear and present knowing when Divine Will is interceding in your life, this is the one book you require!

"We have enjoyed this book immensely. We met Professor Mukerjee, a sadhak of Integral Yoga for over 50 years, and a past director of the International Center for Education, in January 2006, at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. We were charmed by his clear message that living a divine life means being relentless in seeking out weaknesses and shortcomings in yourself and clearly and utterly determined in bridging the gap from where you are - to where you want to be....calling on the Divine, whenever necessary. He gives us the means in his book, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*."

The Recognition of Our Own Heart: Ponderings on the Pratyabhijnahridayam, by Joan Ruvinsky with a foreword by Mark Dyczkowski, is our latest publication. ISBN 978-1-987972-15-3, 164 pages 7 x 10 inches, softcover April 2019, with more than a dozen artistic nature photographs Price: USD\$25.00, CAD\$32.55 in Canada (incl. gst).

In this gem of a book, non-dual yoga and meditation teacher Joan Ruvinsky offers up a beautifully illustrated interpretive translation of one of the foundational texts of Kashmiri Shaivism — twenty short verses that address fundamental and universal questions. Part poetry, part guide-book, part art, it conveys the richness and incandescence so characteristic of the lineage without losing sight of the last 400 years of philosophical inquiry, spiritual revelation, and scholarship.

In the footsteps of the Tantric masters of the medieval period — who were not only great yogis but also accomplished scholars, poets, musicians — Ruvinsky embraces the body, mind, and senses as pathways to enlightenment. In her distinctly poetic and down-to-earth fashion Ruvinsky reminds us to live directly, moment to moment, in the mystery. You already have what you need. She intones, "All contemplations are valid. There are no right answers, no dead ends, only pathways in the infinite." https://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#recognition_heart_book



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News and Notes *continued*

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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

Visit Durga's blog. www.seekingtheself.com

Continued below

Order of Acharya's: Annual report and plans for 2021

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

This is a good time to consider making a donation to "Babaji's Kriya Yoga Order of Acharyas", to enable 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 2019 the members of the Order of Acharyas did the following:

- Brought more than 100 initiation seminars to more than 1,000 participants living in 20 countries including Brazil, India, Japan, Sri Lanka, Russia, Estonia, Spain, Colombia, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, England, Bulgaria, Belgium, Australia, the USA and Canada.
- Conducted a 4 day Satsang Leaders Training seminar for students from across India; and supported twice daily sadhana sessions for 100+ initiates online with Zoom since March 2020.
- Maintained an ashram and publishing office in Bangalore, India which organized five initiation seminars all over India. Vinod Kumar, the ashram manager, conducted free regular public asana and meditation classes there. It published and distributed most of our books and tapes throughout India.
- Published the Voice of Babaji in Portuguese, Kriya Hatha Yoga in Chinese. Published the video Kriya Hatha Yoga online for streaming or download in five

languages

- Sponsored free public classes 3 times weekly in Babaji's Kriya Yoga, and kirtan event at the Quebec ashram.
- Organized two pilgrimages to the new ashram Badrinath attended by more than 40 persons. Maintained the ashram and its staff, and sponsored public Yoga classes and satsangs there.

In the year 2020 - 2021 the Order plans to do the following:

- Bring initiation seminars to most of the above named countries, as well as Indonesia and Poland for the first time.
- Conduct free bi-weekly public asana and meditation classes at our ashrams in Quebec, Bangalore and Sri Lanka.
- Publish the book Babaji and the 18 Siddhas in Polish, Malayalam, Kannada, the book Voice of Babaji in and Kannada.
- Complete the training of 3 Acharyas

The 32 volunteer Acharyas of the Order and many other volunteer organizers need your support to fulfill this program for the year 2020-2021. Your contribution is tax deductible in Canada and the USA.

News and Notes *continued*

We offer our subscribers in the new Euro currency zone to send annual subscription payment of 13 Euros in a cheque payable to "Marshall Govindan in a transfer, to Deutsche Bank, International, BLZ 50070024, account no. 0723106, re. IBAN DE09500700240072310600, BIC/Swift code DEUTDE33HAN. (Or in francophone countries of Europe, le paiement doit être fait au nom de « Marshall Govindan » dans un transfert à la Banque Crédit Lyonnais, Banque 30002, indicatif : 01853, numéro de compte 0009237P80, re. IBAN FR75 3000 2018 5300 0000 9237 P80, BIC CRLYFRPP or a cheque payable to "Marshall Govindan," sent to Francoise Laumain, 50 rue Corvisart, 75013

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