

B a b a j i ' s

# Kriya Yoga Journal

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## Populist politics and our duty as Yoga Sadhaks

By M. G. Satchidananda

The rising tide of political uncertainty and divisiveness everywhere in the world raises questions about how Yoga sadhaks should respond. Should we avoid becoming involved or even interested in politics? Or is it our duty? The potential divisiveness of political debate can easily cause us to forget the primary teaching of Yoga: unity in diversity. But when the very political freedoms that permit us to practice Yoga are threatened and when dharma (purposeful

social order) and the democratic institutions that protect social order are under attack, is it not the duty of Yoga practitioners to consider how to respond and then act? More broadly, should we renounce involvement in worldly affairs or dedicate ourselves to their Divine transformation?

### The rise of populism

Why, particularly today, do these questions demand answers? Briefly, our democratic political institutions

are under tremendous pressure for several reasons. Our civil rights are threatened, including the rights of free speech and freedom of the press, the administration of justice through due process, representative as opposed to direct democracy, and the rule of law. The symptom of the disease, though not the cause, is the growing tide of populism, born of frustration with the inability of representative democracy to solve society's many problems.

The political doctrine of populism proposes that the common people are being exploited by a privileged elite, and it seeks to remedy this. Its goal is to unite the uncorrupted and unsophisticated "little man" against the corrupt elites (usually the elected politicians) and their supporters (usually intellectuals and the rich). It is guided by the belief that political and social goals are best achieved through direct action by the masses. Populism emerges when mainstream political institutions fail to fulfil the expectations of large segments of society. As populism develops, it becomes increasingly exclusionary in the sense that, although "the people" might begin as a loosely defined group, the group is quickly restricted to supporters of the leader.

Populism becomes extreme when

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it promotes the replacement of representative democracy with direct democracy. This occurs when a political leader emerges promising to solve political problems through the bypassing of democratic institutions. Currently, the most obvious examples of this are occurring in Russia, Hungary, and Turkey. As with any symptom of disease such as pain or fever, it is easy to respond with symptomatic relief and ignore the treatment required to heal the body politic. Like disease, it may spread if the underlying cause is left untreated. This is occurring today in Western society, and it is being actively promoted by Russia, whose goal is to break up the existing world order of liberal democracy.

### **Causes of populism**

Populist movements have gotten a lot of attention in the USA during the past decade on both the right and left sides of the political spectrum. As citizens of the most influential representative democratic society in the world, Americans would do well to examine why this is happening. Populism owes its current rise in America to several causes. Over the past few decades, representative democracy has become increasingly corrupted by the influence of money. Getting elected or re-elected, particularly to representative positions on the national level, is very expensive. Large corporations effectively buy the votes of legislative representatives with regards to tax loopholes and economic policies that favor their interests over the public interest.

Getting elected or re-elected also requires politicians to align themselves with the policies being championed by their party leaders, usually at the cost of leaving critical but often complex problems unsolved. Getting re-elected has become the primary goal of most representatives.

Public frustration with the inability of elected representatives to agree on solutions to many urgent social, economic, and other complex problems contributes to the success of populist leaders, who promise quick cures for political paralysis. The US Constitution, which divides power between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, increases the susceptibility of the body politic to political paralysis as a consequence of extreme partisanship in both the executive and legislative branches and, as we will see, in the media.

Even the third branch of government, the judicial, originally designed as a check on the excesses of political partisanship in the legislative and executive branches, has been infected with political partisanship. Decisions by the Supreme Court have contributed to partisanship. Ten years ago, it ruled "corporations are people" in a legal sense and therefore are allowed the same freedom as individual persons regarding campaign finance laws. Further, in recent decades, the courts have allowed political parties to redraw the lines of electoral voting districts to favor incumbent members of their parties. They have also allowed voting laws to become much more restrictive. This has contributed to growing polarization be-

tween political parties and society.

### **The rise of alternative universes of public opinion**

At the same time, the rise of many news sources, resulting from developments in digital communication, and the transformation of some dominant news media into outlets for partisan viewpoints and entertainment, has widened the gap caused by alternative universes in the public opinion. When news media distort facts to maximize viewership and profit and sacrifice high journalistic standards, they fan the flames of partisanship by presenting news in a light designed to generate emotional reaction rather than informed debate. When people subscribe to conspiracy theories and believe the alternative online news outlets that promote them, they come to disbelieve what is reported by news media that embrace high journalistic standards and believe that they are controlled by so-called elites.

Politicians need an opposition and, currently, the news media have been declared the "enemy" of populist leaders in America. A populist leader recently stated that the most prominent network television news outlets are "the enemy of the American people." Populist leaders often attempt to delegitimize or even close down independent news media and, as in Russia and Turkey, may jail or murder journalists and replace independent media with state-controlled organs of propaganda. While trying to gain power, populist leaders declare the reporting of high-standard news media to be "fake news," and assert as true whatever the populist leader says is true. This is not merely the tendency of nearly all politicians to lie about, exaggerate, or spin facts. In reality, they are stating falsehoods with the intent to deceive.

These disturbing developments echo George Orwell's warning in his book 1984, which portrays what can happen when independent news reporting is replaced by organs of government propaganda. The book should cause every citizen to reflect on what they can do to protect the independence of the press.

### **The effects of accelerating change in technology, globalization and climate**

At the same time, change is accelerating in three vital areas: technology, globalization and its effect on economic markets, and the environment with the loss of biodiversity and climate change. Consider the effects of digital computing on how you communicate, work, socialize, seek entertainment or distraction, and form your worldview. Consider how the pace of technological change is increasing, for example your own adoption of apps in your smartphone. Consider how you have lost or may lose your job because it has moved to another country, become obsolete, or has been replaced by a computer program or a robot, if you work in manufacturing. Consider also the "power of one" person to bring about change, beneficial or catastrophic, when multiplied by

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## Populist politics *continued*

the effect of modern digital communication and globalization. All of these sources of accelerating change threaten the status quo. Those who are invested in the status quo fight back. This adds further to the strain on our democratic institutions, which are designed to protect individuals and minorities from abuses of power.

### **Multiculturalism is replacing the melting pot of cultural assimilation**

Our growing interconnectedness through digital communication and globalization, and its effect on the environment, has an ironic cultural twist. The American melting pot, which required conformity, is being replaced by multiculturalism, which contributes to social and political divisiveness. Conservatives, who are primarily older or live in rural areas, resist cultural diversity, whereas progressives, who tend to be younger and urban, embrace it.

Conservatives embrace fundamentalism in religion while seeking a moral high ground and conformity to conventional values as the solution to society's problems. When the physical and social sciences contradict conservative religious beliefs, conservatives ignore or discount them. Further, conservatives distrust the government, favoring self-reliance. Progressives or liberals embrace diversity and intellectual curiosity, and seek to advance science and technology as means to solving society's problems. In their zeal to experiment, however, progressives may ignore the value of traditional, time-tested ways and morals. Both conservatives and liberals may embrace only the facts that conform to their beliefs and ignore those that do not, for example in their choice of news and opinion media, which helped form their own political views. All of this widens the growing divide between conservatives and progressives, as each side is ever more unwilling to listen and engage in respectful discussion.

### **Why dharma is threatened and how to fulfil our duty to protect it**

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?

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 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.

**4.** Because authentic Yoga is conceived as a philosophy or scientific art rather than as a system of beliefs or religion, a Yoga sadhak can engage with any political issue or problem, with research followed by respectful discussion with those who may hold different views, from either a traditional, conservative starting point or a scientific, liberal one. In pursuit of satya, a Yoga sadhak can fulfil his or her svadharma (personal purpose or mission) by applying intelligent reason, curiosity, love, and creativity to solve human suffering.

**5.** A Yoga sadhak must fulfill his or her civic duty to hold elected representatives accountable for their actions or failure to act. Sadhaks can do this not only by exercising their right to vote but also by communicating their opinions on issues about which they have become well informed.

**6.** Where possible, a Yoga sadhak should support with their votes those who put bipartisan problem solving ahead of personal or partisan advantage and by supporting the election campaigns of those who do.

**7.** A Yoga sadhak can uphold dharma by supporting non-profit organizations that protect civil liberties, justice reform efforts, voting rights, and in the USA, reform of campaign financing and electoral districting, as well as those that seek to adapt laws to the new challenges and problems resulting from technology, the digital revolution, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity. A Yoga sadhak has a duty to express love and kindness by volunteering time, energy, and financial resources creatively to assist those who are suffering, individually and collectively.

**8.** A Yoga sadhak should prioritize reform of the system of representative democracy – which is now corrupted by the influence of money and partisan politics – so that it can serve the needs of the public rather than

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# The 9 forms of Bhakti Yoga: the path of love and devotion

By M. G. Satchidananda

For many persons, Bhakti Yoga, the path of love and devotion is the easiest, most effective way to practice Yoga. As we will see, it is also a progressive path which leads to the ultimate goals of Yoga, complete surrender, and the universal vision of love.

Everyone is looking for love. But most persons are looking for someone to love them. Consequently, they make enormous efforts to attract the interest of others, for example, by changing their appearance, talking about themselves, seeking fame, wealth or positions of power. If you want to be alone, be interesting. If you want to find love, be interested. Love is giving. Give your interest, time, presence and kindness. Be interested in the Lord and the means which saints have extolled for God realization.

No relationship, with one exception, will ever completely satisfy or be lasting, and therefore, investing love in them is bound to be threatened by the various manifestations of egoism, including jealousy, attachment, anger, expectation, pride, fear and apathy as well as by karmic consequences and maya, the power of the mind to delude. The one exception is your relationship with the Lord, which is an eternal one.

Bhakti yoga is the cultivation of a relationship with the Lord. Who is the Lord? You may conceive of the Lord with any personal form you admire, for example that of Jesus, Krishna, Shiva, Buddha, Babaji, a saint, or as the impersonal Supreme Being as absolute Being, Conscious and Bliss, Brahman, Supreme Grace Light.

This relationship with the Lord will evolve as your own sense of Who Am I? evolves. In the beginning, the Lord may seem to be distant, or one to whom you pray to fulfill certain desires. The study of spiritual texts and the accounts of saints who have experienced the Lord

will guide and inspire you in this process of becoming closer and intimate with the Lord.

## Cultivate Divine love and devotion through the following nine forms of Bhakti yoga

1. *Shravana*: listening or reading sacred texts and stories, for example, the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana, the Yoga sutras, the Upanishads, the Voice of Babaji can inspire and motivate you to love God, to purify yourself, and to model yourself on the spiritual heroes portrayed therein. Particularly in the early years of one's seeking, these stories and texts may help you to overcome the resistance, born of old habits, memories and tendencies.

2. *Kirtana*: chanting, praising the Lord, devotional song; alone or with a group. The objective is not to make beautiful music. It does not matter if you cannot sing well. It can be done anytime. A very good time to do it is when you are feeling sad, depressed, or anxious. The purpose is to transmute emotional energy into feelings of love, joy, and surrender. Begin while taking a shower to wash away difficult emotions!

3. *Smarana*: remembering the Lord at all times. This can be done by recalling a favorite image of one's favorite image of the Lord, one's ishtadevata, or maintaining a vision of the inner light of consciousness, the impersonal absolute Being, Consciousness and Bliss. It can be reinforced by seeking the Lord, through meditation, reading, metaphysical contemplation, pilgrimages, and worship.

4. *Seva*: selfless service. Any activity into which you can give love or express love to others is seva. Even if it is your job, if your motivation for doing it is without regards to your personal needs or recognition, it is selfless.

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## Populist politics *continued*

those of elected office holders. Sadhaks should support efforts to restrict the ability of corporations and individuals to contribute unlimited amounts to election campaigns in exchange for tax loopholes, subsidies, and support for policies that favor corporate and personal interests at the expense of the public's interest. Public financing of election campaigns is an alternative that will encourage policy debate and defund the negative campaign advertising of identity politics.

9. A Yoga sadhak can be a mentor and engage in satsang (fellowship) with other practitioners. According to the Surgeon General, the most senior public health official in the USA, the most significant disease today in the USA is "isolation," caused by the decline in human-to-human connections. The wisdom of Yoga can be effectively applied to heal the "disease of isolation" through satsang and kirtan (group chanting). By providing guidance, sharing experiences, and showing kindness and encouragement to those who may be struggling with their practice of Yoga or the ego's resistance, every Yoga sad-

hak can contribute to resolving suffering born of social isolation. The cultivation of strong bonds within a community of yogis molds character as each member embraces goodness and love.

In the sphere of interpersonal politics, a Yoga sadhak is uniquely qualified to apply and share the wisdom and technology of Yoga with those who are suffering, which includes everyone. By teaching the yoga postures and basic meditation, by being a good listener, or by remaining centered like the eye of a storm when others are upset – calmly active, actively calm – a Yoga sadhak can help replace with respectful discussion the political divisiveness that now infects families, workplaces, and local communities. A Yoga sadhak can also remain well informed, be able to separate fact from fiction (conspiracy theories), and avoid the us-against-them pull of populism.

May the wisdom and practice of Yoga as a practical philosophy penetrate and direct human affairs in all areas as we aspire to and surrender to our Divine potential. □



## Bhakti Yoga *continued*

It can be informed by karma yoga, in which one is not attached to the results, and one sees the Lord as the Doer of all, and oneself as a mere instrument, and acts as a Witness.

5. *Archana*: worship, alone or with a group; internal or external. The object of worship, whatever it is made of, paper, clay, metal or wood, represents the ephemeral, and serves as a window to the Lord. In effect, you pretend that the object of worship is worthy your unconditional love, and as a result you experience the joy of unconditional love and begin to bring it into all relationships.

6. *Vandana*: salutation, bowing down before the Lord, not only physically, but focusing with intensity, all of your life energies towards service and surrender to the Lord;

7. *Dasya*: obedience to the will of the Lord; repeat: "Not my will, but Your Will be done."

8. *Sakhya*: readiness to greet the Lord in all places and in all disguise or forms in the world;

9. *Ishvara-pranidhana*: complete surrender to the Lord  
Ishvara-pranidhana or "surrender to the Lord" is the ultimate form of Bhakti yoga. Understanding and practice of the other forms of bhakti yoga may help you to realize it. You may realize the Lord through love and devotion. Many saints have said that God is love. Only the Siddhas said that "Love is God," as Tirumular said in the Tirumandiram, in a famous verse: "anbu civam".

Bhakti grows as you grow in the knowledge that the Divine is always within you and that the Divine cannot go anywhere else. Love is the result of this knowledge. Love's blessing will overflow into your life and transform your mind and body once you feel the presence of Love. Prayer also elevates the mind. It forms a link to the Divine. It can remove obstacles, remove negativity, free you from desire and fear, and bring you love and joy.

Mantra repetition, known as japa, will also help you to develop love, purity, humility, inspiration, a one-pointed mind. Choose the name of the Lord, the mantra which most inspires you. In this Kali yuga, mantra japa is the easiest way to God realization.

### The Guru

The word guru is actually derived from the word guna, and it refers to a tattva or a principle of Nature, the teaching of how to transcend or liberate yourself from the gunas. It is the Guru that teaches you how to transcend or liberate yourself from the gunas, the forces of Nature. By doing so, you become the Eternal Witness, Shiva, present within but untouched by Nature, represented by the image of Kali standing and dancing above Shiva. The Guru tattva may manifest through any experience which reveals Truth, unconditional Love, Beauty or Wisdom. When it manifests consistently through a person, there is a tendency to refer to that person as a "Guru", but it is not the person that is the "Guru;" the person is only a vehicle or an envelope which delivers the teaching, the Guru. So your teachers are only deliv-

ering the mail to you! Remember that Guru, God and Self are One.

Nowhere in the writings of the Siddhas do they praise or worship any deity. But they do worship their Gurus, because they revealed the means to liberate them from the influence of the gunas, through the practice of Yoga. The entire last chapter of the Yoga-sutras concerns the transcendence of the gunas. In Babaji's Kriya Yoga, the Guru tattva has manifested in the forms of Babaji and the 18 Siddhas. You may manifest your love and devotion to them by chanting their mantras, and seeking their guidance and grace. While they are not our savior, they do provide to us the means of salvation, the practice of Kriya Yoga, and their wisdom teachings.

### In Patanjali's Yoga-sutras ishvara-pranidhana, or surrender to the Lord, is the third element of Kriya Yoga

Together with the other two elements, the constant practice of detachment, and self study, surrender bring Self-realization and the weakening of the causes of suffering. Equanimity follows. You "let go" and "let God" take care of it. Patanjali further explains in Yoga-sutra 1.23 that by surrendering our limited ego-consciousness to the Lord, we may also achieve Samadhi:

*Or because of one's surrender to the Lord one successfully achieves cognitive absorption.*

### But who is the Lord?

*Isvara is the special Self, Purusha, untouched by any afflictions, actions, fruits of actions or by any inner impressions of desires.* – I.24

The Lord, the "special Self," is the Self of all selves. Unlike the individual soul which is involved in Nature, it is not affected by desires and karmic effects of desires. In Tamil, "isa" is another name for the Supreme Being, Siva, who is not to be confused with the limited deity with the same name in the Vedas, nor the one third of the trinity referred to by early Western scholars. He defies limitations or description. "Sva" means "own." Therefore "isvara" means "Siva, one's own Being," who is transcendent in relation to all manifestation. Self-realization may come when you surrender the perspective of being apart from the Supreme Being, and recognize Siva as your own being. "Jiva is becoming Siva" summarizes the theology of the Tamil Yoga Siddhas. It affirms both the reality of the soul's evolutionary process in Nature, and its inherent Divinity. To realize this special Self we must let go of false identification with personality and desires. We must go beyond passing manifestations, action, desires and the afflictions of the mind. The Lord has never been under the delusion that he is in bondage to the limiting forms of nature.

This surrender must be complete, and not include any sense of some special status. It requires keen discrimination with regards to your motivations. In devotion, you feel "not my will but Thy will be done." This perspective

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## Bhakti Yoga *continued*

makes transcendence easy. As long as you feel that it is you who is doing something by your own power and will, you are stuck in the egoistic perspective of “can,” “I will,” “I cannot.” But when you completely surrender that “I” to “Thou” you rise above Nature and are free in the pure Self. This form of surrender involves feeling the existence, in the innermost core of your being, of the presence of the Lord, as Consciousness and Energy, Siva and Shakti, and to feel always that your actions are prompted by That.

The Siddhas were not devotees who worshipped idols. They believed in that “the Lord” is the Supreme Abstraction: Absolute Being, Absolute Consciousness, Absolute Bliss: satchidananda. The recurrent use by the Siddhas of the word “civam,” in Tamil (or “siva” in Sanskrit), an abstract noun meaning “goodness,” “auspiciousness,” and “pure intelligence,” shows that they believed an abstract Godhead, rather than a personal God.

In a remarkable series of verses in the first chapter of the Yoga-Sutras, Patanjali further describes the Lord in Yoga-sutra I.25: *In the Supreme the seed of complete omniscience is unsurpassed.*

Here is emphasized the Supreme Being is all-knowing, rather than all-powerful. All knowledge must have a source, and so the seed of knowingness exists in everything. Therefore, by inference you may determine the existence of a Supreme Being.

Yoga-sutra I.26: *Unconditioned by time, he is the guru of even the most ancient gurus.*

The rishis who wrote the Vedas and the agamas, including the Tirumandiram, attribute them as revelations from the Lord. Siva is therefore referred to as the first Yogi, the king of Yogis, who inspires every subsequent generation of Yogis. In every age, the Lord makes the supreme wisdom accessible to sincere seekers. Truth is eternal.

And in the next verse Patanjali tells us in the next verse I.27: *The word expressive of ishvara is the mystic sound AUM.*

AUM is the pranava, the sound of prana or energy, which is experienced at four states of consciousness. “A” represents prana experienced through the five senses; going to a deeper level within, “U” represents prana experienced as dreams, “M” as dreamless sleep, and beyond is the silent sound “mmm” which is experienced as “turya,” the fourth state of consciousness, the transcendental source of all other states of consciousness.

How can you know the Lord? Patanjali tells us in the next verse, I.28: *Therefore, one should repeat this sacred syllable AUM while reflecting on its meaning with devotion.*

While Patanjali nowhere prescribes any rituals, prayers or other expressions of “devotion to the Lord,” “ishvara-pranidhana,” his admonition to repeat Aum with devotional feeling, or love, while reflecting on its meaning, is consistent with the Tamil Yoga Siddha’s emphasis on internal worship, rather than temple worship.

In the final verse in this series related to “ishvara-pranidhana,” verse I.29, Patanjali tells us the result of this

practice of repetition of the mantra AUM: *From this practice comes the attainment of the inner Self awareness and the disappearance of all obstacles.*

When your consciousness flows towards outer sense objects you identify with your reactions to them. By following the sound of AUM inwardly to its source, you go beyond the surface movements of the mind and begin to become conscious of Self, consciousness itself. Furthermore, being conscious, you gain the means of overcoming the nine obstacles to continuous inner awareness, which he describes in the following verse: disease, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sense indulgence, false perception, failure to reach firm ground, instability.

Therefore, Self-realization comes to the devotee who surrenders to the Lord, as a result of Divine Grace. The concept of “grace,” or “prasada,” is found throughout the Tirumandiram and the writings of the Siddhas.

Babaji has said that receiving the Grace of the Lord depends upon three things: how much devotion for the Lord you manifest, how much sadhana (yogic practice) you do, and how much service to others you offer. By devotion you learn pure, unconditional love; the lover and the beloved become one. You surrender the ego’s perspective. This love brings you from duality to non-duality. Through service you forget petty problems born of the ego, and develop the ultimate goal of Babaji’s Kriya Yoga, which is the universal vision of love.

### Images of Surrender

To cultivate this third element of Patanjali’s Kriya Yoga, surrender to the Lord, the following three images will be helpful:

1. See yourself prostrate at the feet of the Lord in surrender of all pride, in perfect humility;
2. See yourself revealing to the Lord everything, opening yourself as you open a book, hiding nothing.
3. See yourself in arms of the Lord, with tender and complete confidence.

### Affirmations for surrender

1. May your Will be done, and not mine;
2. As You will, as You will;
3. I am Yours for Eternity.

### Meditation for surrender

Turn within and look deeply, beyond the surface movements of the mind and your human nature. Notice that part of you that is still, that is luminous, that is blissful. Notice that which is unaffected by any affliction (ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, fear of death that is unaffected by any karma (consequences of past actions), unaffected by any desires. Notice that which is undisturbed, solid, eternal and at peace. Now chant AUM.

Reference: *Kriya Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Siddhas.*



# How to make your work your Yoga

By M. G. Satchidananda

I still vividly recall one of the first and most important teachings made by Yogi Ramaiah when I joined his new ashram in Norwalk, California in September, 1970: "Get a job!" It was difficult to find any job, as it was during the height of the Viet Nam war, and as residents of his Yoga ashram we had to refrain from cutting our hair and beards. Consequently, no potential employer would hire me because I looked like a "hippie," or "anti-war activist." It was the height of the counter-cultural revolution in America, a period filled with paradoxes. I had recently graduated from Georgetown University's School of Foreign service, and successfully passed the written and oral examinations to enter the U.S. Foreign Service as a diplomat. But, instead I decided to dedicate my life to Kriya Yoga. My local Draft Board had then exempted me from military service as a "Divinity Student." Letters from Yogi Ramaiah, my college roommate, my father, and Father King, S.J. convinced the Board that I merited the same exemption as seminarians in any religious institution. I was probably the first and last person to ever be exempted from military service because I was studying Yoga! Today, Yoga has unfortunately come to be understood as something else in the West.

For weeks, I searched in vain. When I returned each night from a fruitless search for a job, I was greeted by Yogi Ramaiah with the question: "Did you find a job?" and when I said "No," he would reply, "Try harder," or "Grab the first one you can find, and aspire for something better." All I wanted to really do was to sit and meditate. I did manage to find a job, selling the Encyclopedia Britannica, and Electrolux vacuum cleaners door to door. After that, I drove a delivery truck for an auto parts store, making deliveries to local garage in my boyhood neighborhood of West Los Angeles. Finally, I got a civil service job, as a public welfare caseworker for more than families with dependent children. Seven months later, Yogi Ramaiah sent me to Chicago to start a Kriya Yoga center, and to save enough money to go to India a year later. While in Chicago, for the first six months, I loaded tractor trailer trucks by hand with thirty to forty tons of merchandise every day in a warehouse, and drove a taxicab during the night, before getting a job again with Cook County Department of Social Services, this time, on skid row, where the derelicts lived. After one year in Chicago, Yogi Ramaiah sent me to live in his Yoga ashrams in Tamil Nadu, India. During these seven years since my initiation into Babaji's Kriya Yoga in lower Manhattan, New York City, I practiced Babaji's fivefold path of Kriya Yoga an average eight hours, worked for eight or more hours and day and used the balance of time for rest and the duties of daily routine, including a weekly class I gave in the 18 postures. All of this gave me tremendous energy and inspiration. I learned to make my work my yoga when I understood that all activities could be transformed into karma yoga.

This way of life continued when I returned and after Yogi Ramaiah asked me to develop an ashram in Washington, D.C., and five years later to immigrate to Quebec and to assume responsibility for the Montreal Yoga ashram he had established there in 1970. My experience in transforming work into karma yoga during these early years enabled me to subsequently develop two successful careers, first as an economist, and after returning from a third one year assignment to India, as a computer systems auditor.

## Why is work valued in a materialistic culture?

Before trying to understand what is karma yoga, ask yourself the following questions: Why do you value work? How important to your happiness is work? If you cannot find your ideal job, will you be unhappy? In our materialistic culture, work is usually valued most because of the money it provides, so it is a means to an end. At some point, probably later in a career, it is valued because of the status or sense of purpose it may provide. While there is nothing inherently wrong in such values, they are very limiting. If you lose your job, you may also find yourself lost: your sense of purpose, self-respect, and well-being may be damaged severely. In reality no job can satisfy all of your needs, no matter how hard you work, or how successful you become in it. Work in a materialistic culture generally leads to increased egoism, fear, and desire.

## How to transform work into karma yoga

Any honest work, including volunteer work, can be done as an offering to the Divine, without attachment to the results or the fruit of the action. To practice karma yoga, while performing any activity, remain balanced and detached in the face of success, or failure, pleasure or pain, praise or blame. Remain aware of what is aware, the indwelling Jiva atman, while performing all actions, using Nityananda Kriya. Value your job as the source of income which enables you to practice Yoga intensively during your free time. Value all activities as opportunities to practice the yamas (social restraints) and niyamas (observances) of Yoga, as well as to cultivate the perspective of the Witness. By so doing you will avoid the risk of compartmentalizing your practice and development in Yoga in relatively brief periods of daily life. Integrate Yoga into all activities, making your life your Yoga. Apply your study of the Gita and the Yoga-Sutras to your activities by deep reflection and self study. Respond after reflection, and in light of this study, to the emotional challenges which arise when you work.

A karma yogi is always ready to help others. A karma yogi performs action as skillfully and as consciously as possible. As long as we are incarnated we are obliged to act, even if we are sitting in a cave somewhere. Our ac-

*Continued on Page 8*



# ABCs of deepening your practice of Babaji's Kriya Hatha Yoga (Part 3)

By Durga Ahlund

ABCs of Babaji's Kriya Hatha Yoga will better explain how you can experience the 18 asana as a total hygiene, a complete purification of the total organism, the physical and the subtle bodies – all five levels of your being – physical, vital energy, mind, consciousness, and superconsciousness. Asana works directly on the physical, but targets the subtle levels that lies behind it. Why not consciously utilize asana to create a bridge between your physical and your spiritual being so that you gain not only in vitality and health but also in dynamism, compassion and self-confidence. The ABC's will continue as a regular column in the quarterly, Kriya Yoga Journals. Please refer to previous journals for more information on ways to achieve all the benefits possible from your practice of the 18 postures. Learn these techniques from an experienced, authorized instructor.

Anyone who wishes to gain any real results from Yoga must commit themselves to serious and constant study of how it works. And that includes asana. Asana targets not only blockages in the musculature but blockages in the subtle channels, the nadis. By focusing and fixing your mind on inner consciousness, on inner space, Yoga will work to open these channels and the energy, the prana, flowing within them.

Balance is what happens when the body is simultaneously aligned and relaxed. Once balanced the energies and sensations in the body begin to open, coming out of dormancy. The range of sensations you can feel is vast. Subtle shimmering, electricity, pinpoint pricking, tingling, pulsing, or a rush of sensation flowing, like a torrent



Durga with students in the fish pose at the Ashram.

of water through your body. Some are pleasurable, some intense. Regardless of the fleeting nature of the individual waves, the energy felt is substantial. In addition, deeply held pain, perhaps harbored for years beneath a blanket of numbness can arise, taking you by surprise.

Holding postures longer (3 min or more), allows you to drop deeper into yourself and so more sensations can appear. Each posture must be a balance of strength and reflexivity, of alignment and relaxation. This creates the opportunity to remain steady and stable, in a relaxed mental state, breathing deeply, maintaining an internal focus, so that deeply held tensions can be released from body and mind.

From the outside, we appear very solid, but science and

*Continued on Page 9*

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## Make work your Yoga *continued*

tions can serve our process of enlightenment, rather than our ego's desire and cares, if performed as karma yoga. Be a witness when you act. When things go well, thank the Lord! When things go badly, take responsibility for it, and learn what you can from the experience, rather than blaming God!

In this way, the karmic consequences of your past actions will gradually work themselves out and become exhausted. And you will cease to create more karmic consequences in the future, by responding consciously to life's challenges and events, rather than reacting from habitual, emotional patterns. You will discover and be guided to follow your dharma, the way of right action, the Tao, and bring happiness to yourself and others.

If you are a very active person, who finds it difficult to meditate, the path of karma Yoga, when perfected, will lead to enlightenment according to the Bhagavad Gita. You will become calmly active and actively calm.

### **"I am not the doer"**

At an advanced stage, the Yogi who has combined karma Yoga with bhakti Yoga and jnana Yoga feels "I am not the doer," that the Lord does everything, and that he or she is merely the Lord's instrument. But to adopt this perspective, the Yogi must be free of anger, egoism, greed pride and personal desire, and be prepared to help others. The Yogi should live a simple life and scrutinize his motives. In this way, the Yogi will develop purity of heart and see God in all faces, and feel the indwelling Presence everywhere. As a result, the power of enlightened reason, Buddha Shakti, will enable you to contribute solutions to any problem where you put your attention. The world desperately needs karma yogis in all fields. Babaji himself has said: "The swamis who renounce involvement in the world are very good, but I cannot work through them." By surrendering to the Guru, as a karma yogi, the Lord will work through you as his instrument dedicated to the world. □



## Deepening you practice *continued*

mysticism of the ancients agree that we are nothing but waves of energy; that the innermost self is empty space, filled with consciousness, which is also prana, a current of life force. When we reach this empty space, we are able to connect with higher consciousness. And at times, it is easier to arrive at this space in asana, than it is seated on a meditation cushion.

-C-

**Concentration** – Concentration is a critical component of progress in asana. Concentration in combination with physical movements bring integrative gains in yoga. Fix concentration on the spinal column or the currents of energy running in the body, or on centralizing energy in the spine, or on the chakras, as you hold the asana steadily in comfort.

**Conscious control of energy** – Through conscious breathing, alignment, active stretching and adjustment, bandhas, mudras, mantra and kriya movements, you gain the control to move energy in the subtle body. When you can feel energy and consciously raise it through yogic practices you are directly linking to your spiritual body and refining your energy.

**Centralizing Prana** – The subtle vitalizing channels, the nadis all flow off the subtle spine. Utilize awareness, bandhas and spinal breathing to visualize and raise energy through the spine. This will strengthen your asana and send energy through the subtle channels. Visualize prana as you deepen your practice of spinal breathing; on inhalation see the silvery or sparkly energy rise up the spine, on exhalation see it expand throughout the body. (see specific directions on spinal breathing in the 2017 Winter Kriya Yoga Journal).

**Chakras** – At some point you can add on visualization of the chakras situated along the spine, with or without using the bija mantras for each. Each of the 18 postures works on one or more of the chakras.

-D-

**Deep muscles** – To stretch fully use the deep muscles not just the superficial ones. You can do this by moving deeper, slowly and gently on exhalation, relaxing with each ujjayi breath. Make the outside of the body firm and taut, visualizing soft, fluid lines of energy throughout the stretch. Hold postures for three minutes, fully stretched but without force, maintaining attention of your breathing and the moving sensations of stretch and release. This will stimulate circulation to the deep muscles and stabilize the joints and stretch connective tissue and ligaments.

**Deepening postures** – By consciously entering deeper levels of musculature and maintaining the posture for an extended length of time, you can access psychological and emotional tensions and stimulate dynamic energy from the solar plexus. If you maintain awareness as you hold at deeper levels, it is possible to stimulate and liberate unresolved and hurtful experiences stored in muscles memory.

**Deepening relaxation** – Relaxation in the tissues

helps muscles work more efficiently as blood circulation is increased and fatigue is relieved. The relaxation that follows each posture helps assimilate the new circulation of blood, lymph, and prana; release toxins, soothe the nervous system and increase mental energy as blood pressure is reduced.

**Detachment** – Be detached on the mat, and you will gain more detachment off the mat. Make time for asana and give it the attention this healing practice deserves.

**Devotion** – The 18 Posture Series is unique. You will gain the broadest benefits by developing a sense that the series is a ritual of worship. To worship the Self is to truly begin Yoga; to worship the prana shakti within is key to success in Babaji's Kriya Yoga. With proper practice, the 18 asana can establish a link between mind, body and prana, a linking of your mind and spiritual consciousness.

**Drishti** – It is importance to utilize drishti, the internal gaze in asana; drawing the epicenter of the mind to a specific point. The gaze is an internal cue: where to turn the eyes to better stimulate the movement of energy up the spine. You should know how to concentrate the gaze at the ajna chakra, at space between the brows or inside the center of the skull, while holding a posture. This will develop your inner strength and willpower, as it increases your ability to affect energy within the subtle spine. Practice drishti with your eyes closed to ensure that consciousness is not split. You will find the internal gaze more easily establishes you in each asana and deepens relaxation.

**Dynamic and Static** – Yoga is dynamic. Certain postures in our series are dynamic. Dynamic poses are used to gently loosen the body and remove stagnant blood from different parts. They help tighten the skin and tone muscles and strengthen the lungs and encourage movement in the digestive and excretory systems. Dynamic postures will speed up circulation and metabolism and make the whole body more flexible, stimulating physical and vital energy. All the 18 postures have a static stage. In this still stage, the prana shakti which is dynamic energy, will be stimulated. Static postures are those held for several minutes. An asana should be held with attention but without force as respiration slows down and awareness is directed upward. Static holdings offer passive stretching of the muscles and ligaments, which need sufficient time to stimulate circulation and assimilate the stretch deeply. Static holdings gently massage internal organs, glands and muscles as well as relax the nerves throughout the body. They bring tranquility to the mind as they bring steadiness to the body. Stability and the feeling of wellbeing should be the effect of this asana practice.

**Dynamism** – Regularly direct prana shakti within the sushumna nadi as you practice your asana, and dynamism will remain with you off the mat. When prana shakti supports your sadhana, your sadhana supports your life. This inner force will guide your life, not your ego. You will however have to remain vigilant that the ego doesn't interfere.



# News and Notes

**Pilgrimage to the new Badrinath Ashram with Acharyas Sita Siddhananda and Kailash:** September 1-18, 2017. Join us for a life changing, unforgettable pilgrimage to the place where Babaji attained soruba samadhi, the ultimate state of enlightenment. For the first time we will be able to fully use its facilities. Details: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/Pilgrimages-himalayas.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/Pilgrimages-himalayas.htm)

**Pilgrimage to Sri Lanka December 29, 2017 to January 12, 2018,** with Acharyas Satyananda, Kailash and Kriyananadamayi. See details at: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pilgrimages-srilanka.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pilgrimages-srilanka.htm)

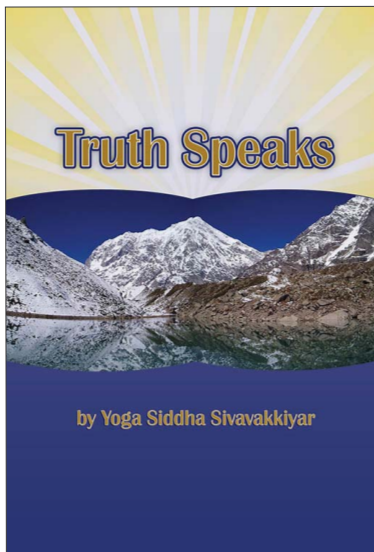
**Second level initiations** will be given by M.G. Satchidananda in Quebec, June 16-18, 2017 and October 20-22, 2017 and by Skandavel in Colorado April 7-9, and December 1-3, 2017.

**Third level initiations** will be offered with M. Govindan Satchidananda in Quebec July 14-23, 2017 and in Brazil in November 2017. They will also be offered by Satyananda in Germany, by Nityananda in Spain, by Sita Siddhananda in France, by Ishvarananda in Estonia. Attain the goal of Self-realization with powerful kriyas to awaken the chakras and to go into the breathless state of samadhi.

**Teacher Training course in Kriya Hatha Yoga at the Quebec Ashram: June 28 to July 11, 2017 in English**

**and July 28 to August 9, 2017 in French:** See details at: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/hatha-yoga-teacher-training.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/hatha-yoga-teacher-training.htm)

**New Ebook: "Truth Speaks" (Civavakkiyam)** by a well-known "pious rebel" Yoga Siddhar Civavakkiyar, translation and commentary by Dr. T.N. Ganapathy and Dr. Geeta Anand. This is the collection of poems is famous for their non-conforming and revolutionary ideas besides their bluntness and forthright directness. It includes 530 verses on topics ranging from kundalini yoga to social issues. The forceful clarity and absolute sincerity of these songs jolt people out of their intellectual rut and conventional thinking. May be ordered from Babaji's Kriya Yoga and Publications. In USA and overseas: USD\$7.00, In Canada: CAD\$9.00 (inc gst). Number of color photographs- approximately 150 (total images 198), ISBN 978-1-895383-85-0. 346 page Ebook.



**Enlightenment: It's Not What You Think**, our latest publication, by Marshall Govindan, reveals how you can re-

place 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

*Continued on Page 11*

## Body, self and consciousness according to Tirumular's Tirumandiram: A comparative study with Kashmir Saivism

By Geetha Anand and Sangeetha Menon

Published in the International Journal of Dharma Studies. January 2017 available here:

[http://www.readcube.com/articles/10.1186/s40613-016-0045-5?author\\_access\\_token=JbXjmD6WWwgefv-MKwdVW\\_BpE1tBhCbnbw3BuzI2RO3rn9MVc6Sfybl4geqFdYno-Q8O2ihBqrD\\_TRCnt90FF50NhyMd4pWaMTZElowSgNlMxac2Qgf7DSwk0sWtbWYTSt4gY\\_zl43dml7mIYQaw%3D%3D](http://www.readcube.com/articles/10.1186/s40613-016-0045-5?author_access_token=JbXjmD6WWwgefv-MKwdVW_BpE1tBhCbnbw3BuzI2RO3rn9MVc6Sfybl4geqFdYno-Q8O2ihBqrD_TRCnt90FF50NhyMd4pWaMTZElowSgNlMxac2Qgf7DSwk0sWtbWYTSt4gY_zl43dml7mIYQaw%3D%3D)

**Abstract:** Tirumular's Tirumandiram is the earliest known Tamil treatise on yoga. This text is considered to be both, a devotional work as well as a tantric text. Unlike other major Siddha compositions, Tirumandiram does not contain any section on medicinal preparations or alchemy. It is the only Tamil text where the sections are named tan iram.

In contrast to the popular pluralistic Saiva Siddhanta, Tirumandiram, one of the twelve Saiva cannons (tirumurai), is monistic in its philosophy. This study, while elaborating on the metaphysics of the text Tirumandiram, also examines the shared philosophical thoughts between the monistic Kashmir Saivism and Tamil Siddha mystics.

After an interesting introduction which summarizes the entire work, it describes Tirumular's analysis of consciousness, the impurities of egoity (anava), delusion (maya) and karma which hide the soul's innate divinity as Siva, the types of souls according to the degree by which they are affected by these impurities, the limiting factors (tattvas), the five states of consciousness, and the nine higher states of consciousness with turya, the supreme state beyond waking, dreaming, deep sleep. It also describes the types of bodies which depend upon the plane in which the soul operates. Kashmir Saiva concepts of souls and states of consciousness are also described and compared with those in the Tirumandiram.



## News and Notes *continued*

intuitive guidance.

*"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: Its Not What You Think 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. 192 pages. US\$14.95 CN\$18.75*

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# Ashram under construction at Badrinath

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