



B a b a j i ' s

# Kriya Yoga Journal

## Editorial

### The practice of Babaji's Kriya Yoga in the light of recent advances in neuroscience

By M. G. Satchidananda

Recent advances in neuroscience provide practical lessons for students of Yoga. Thanks to functional magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scientists have learned more about the brain in the past twenty years than in all of recorded history. They have been able to map the activities of the brain and the complex interactions of its physiology and neurological functions that shape our experience

of the world.

Informed by them, we can better understand the hows and whys of our human operating system, the root causes of suffering, and how we can change these causes to improve ourselves on all levels of body, mind, and interpersonal relationships.

The brain has evolved during the past three million years, tripling in size. Its more primitive parts domi-

nate the brain's activities when danger threatens our survival. Those parts of the brain which have evolved relatively recently govern rational thinking, interpersonal capabilities, such as empathy, cooperative planning, which have helped our ancestors to survive. Factors that promote cooperation have been woven into our brains gradually. These include altruism, generosity, concern about reputation, fairness, forgiveness, language, morality and religion. These inhibit those more primitive parts of our which govern emotional reactions. But as our ability to cooperate has increased our capacity for aggression has also evolved.

As our brains grew in size, early humans needed a longer childhood to develop and train the brain; and as childhood grew longer, our ancestors needed to find new ways to bond parents and children and other members of their bands to support everyone. Multiple neural networks evolved to accomplish this, stimulating reward type hormones as well as the activation of other punishment systems (stressors) due to social re-

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jection.

Have you ever heard someone say: “Stress took years off my life”? Dr. Elisabeth Blackburn received a Nobel Prize for demonstrating how this happens, by proving that stress shortens the telomeres, the ends of DNA chromosomes that affect aging. And a recent small pilot study lead by Dr. Blackburn and Dr. Dean Ornish, shows for the first time that changes in diet, yoga, meditation, stress management and social support may result in longer telomeres. See:

<http://scienceblog.com/66697/starting-yoga-and-healthy-diet-will-make-your-cells-younger/#cUSIB93KWFDSt6vf.99>

### **Change your mind and your brain changes too**

If we consider that the mind is an embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information, we can use the mind to change the brain. By focusing our attention, intentionally directing the flow of energy and information through our neural circuits, we can directly alter the brain's activity and its structure. To do so, we must know how to promote well-being through awareness. Mental activity actually creates new neural structures. Hence, even fleeting thoughts and emotions can leave lasting marks on your brain, like water on bare earth. In order to develop a strong nervous system, one that can keep our endocrine, cardiovascular and digestive systems in balance, neuroscience informs us how the practice of Yoga can create the necessary new nerve structures for our modern, stress-filled lifestyles.

According to neuroscience, a part of the neural emotional circuit includes the lateral prefrontal cortex that lies in both the left and right hemispheres of the brain. The one on the left side is connected with positive feelings such as compassion, goodness, acceptance and joy; the one on the right side is associated with negative ones, such as fear, sadness, depression and aversion. It appears that when we begin life, the two sides are balanced, and when one feels negative, the other side balances it, and vice à versa. But as the years go by, the right side becomes bigger than the left side. However, the left hemisphere, which controls positive emotions, grows quickly among meditators.

Researchers have noted that if one practices meditation daily even for one week, the effects are visible on the electro-encephalogram machine. If one practices for eight weeks, not only are the results more visible, but the practitioners feel many positive changes. This buries the long held belief that our brain's cellular structure is unchangeable, and that if one was born with a pessimistic outlook on life, one would die as a pessimist. Quite the contrary, we can all change the structure of our brains.

### **Did you know that:**

- Your brain is three pounds of tofu-like tissue, containing 1.1 trillion cells, including 100 billion neurons. A neuron or nerve cell is an electrically excitable cell that processes and transmits information through electrical

and chemical signals. A chemical signal occurs via a synapse, a specialized connection with other cells. Neurons connect to each other to form neural networks. Neurons are the core components of the nervous system, which includes the brain, spinal cord, and, and peripheral ganglia.

- All neurons are electrically excitable, maintaining voltage gradients across their membranes. At its receiving synapses a neuron gets signals – usually a burst of chemical called neurotransmitters – from other neurons. These signals tell a neuron either to fire or not; when it fires, it sends signals to other neurons through its transmitting synapses, telling them to fire or not. Each neuron signal is a bit of information; a typical neuron fires 5-50 times a second. All of that information is what science broadly defines a mind, most of which is outside of our awareness.

- Conscious mental events are based on temporary coalitions of synapses that form and disperse –usually within seconds. Neurons can also make lasting circuits, strengthening their connections to each other as a result of mental activity.

- The mind and the brain interact with each other to such a degree that they are best understood as a single, co-dependent, mind/brain system.

- The brain is the primary shaper of the mind. Even though it is only 2 percent of our body weight, it uses 20-25% of its oxygen and glucose.

- Neurons do not undergo cell division. In humans, neurogenesis largely ceases during adulthood—but in two brain areas, the hippocampus and olfactory bulb, there is strong evidence for generation of substantial numbers of new neurons.

- Our brains have evolved from neural tissues as sensory and motor systems needed to communicate with one another in more complex ways, finally centralizing in the form of a brain. The brain itself has evolved. Its oldest most primitive part, referred to as the reptilian brain, or brain stem, lies in the center, beneath the cortex and sub-cortex, and governs the most concrete functions, and has the most simplistic structures, with the fastest, most motivationally intense activities.

- The limbic system (or paleomammalian brain) is a complex set of brain structures that lies below the cortex, and right under the cerebrum. It is not a separate system, but a collection of structures. The limbic system includes the olfactory bulbs, hippocampus, and amygdala. It supports a variety of functions, including emotion, behavior, motivation, long term memory and smell. It appears to be primarily responsible for our emotional life, and has a great deal to do with the formation of memories. In Alzheimer's disease, the hippocampus is one of the first regions of the brain to suffer damage; memory loss and disorientation are included among the early symptoms. Damage to the hippocampus can also result from oxygen starvation, which in turn is caused by poor circulation.

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• The cortex, which is divided into two hemispheres, and containing several lobes, evolved relatively recently, is the most complex in structure, governs conceptual activity, and has the slowest, most motivationally diffuse activities. The modern cortex has great influence over the rest of the brain, and been shaped by evolutionary pressures to develop ever-improving abilities to parent, bond, communicate, cooperate and love. Its' left hemisphere focuses on sequential and linguistic processing, while the right hemisphere specialized in holistic and visual-spatial processing.

### **The brain has evolved to help us survive, but its three primary survival strategies also make us suffer**

To survive, three strategies all animals have are to:

- Separate what is actually connected, in order to create a boundary between themselves and the world;
- Stabilize what keeps changing, in order to maintain their internal systems within tight ranges;
- Hold onto fleeting pleasures and escape inevitable pains, in order to approach opportunities and avoid threats.

Whenever a strategy becomes problematic, uncomfortable, even painful, alarm signals pass through the animal's nervous system to put it back on track. Most animals don't have nervous systems complex enough to allow these alarms to grow into significant distress. But humans do: we worry about the future, regret the past, and blame ourselves for the present. We get frustrated when we cannot have what we want, and experience disappointment after our desires are satisfied. We become disturbed about being in pain, angry about dying, and depressed about our perceived conditions. All of these emotional reactions are created by our brain, originating in the relatively primitive limbic system, the amygdala, with the following consequences:

- The effort to maintain separations is at odds with the many ways we are actually connected with our environment, and dependent upon it. As a result, you may feel subtly isolated, lonely, even alienated, overwhelmed, or in a struggle with the world
- As everything is changing, the brain produces uncomfortable signals of threat to its stability, and these signals keep coming, coloring them with feelings: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. We approach what is pleasant, avoid what's unpleasant, and move on from what is neutral.
- Due to our evolution, we give much more attention to unpleasant experiences. Because of this bias towards negativity, we don't notice good news, and suffer from anxiety and pessimism.
- Humans imagine, or simulate experiences with de-

sire and fears. Once satisfied, desires prove to have been exaggerations. So too, do our fears turn out to be exaggerated or unreal. These keep from enjoying the present moment.

But if the brain is the cause of our suffering, it can also be its cure. So the above consequences of our brain's evolution can be remedied. Self-awareness and compassion for ourselves are the keys to doing so. We can choose to become aware of the causes of our suffering, or allow ourselves to be ruled by them.

### **The role of the parasympathetic nervous system in balancing the sympathetic nervous system**

There are some causes of suffering that are inescapable, as they come from external sources: physical discomfort due to a change in our environment or an accident, scorn or rejection from others, distress when loved ones are harmed or die. But most of our suffering comes either from our reactions to these external causes or from what we create in our mind. But whatever its source or cause, suffering courses through the body via the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPAA) of the endocrine system. When there is a negative reaction such as anger or fear, this results in the adrenal glands releasing stress hormones, epinephrine (adrenaline) and cortisol. Adrenaline increases the heart rate, dilates your pupils, so you can receive more light, moves more blood to large muscle groups, and dilates your lungs so you can run faster. Cortisol suppresses the immune system to reduce inflammation from wounds. Reproduction and digestion are slowed to compensate. Emotions are intensified, and the brain mobilizes and organizes itself for action, focusing

on negative information, emphasizing fear and anger.

In the harsh physical and social environments in which we evolved, this activation of multiple systems helped our ancestors to survive. Today, because of the above causes, combined with all of the stress that modern life imposes upon us, most people experience chronic activation of the SNS/HPAA systems, with numerous negative consequences for their physical and mental health. These include gastrointestinal conditions, weakening of the immune system, hardening of the arteries, diabetes, pre-menstrual syndrome, erectile dysfunction, lowered libido, anxiety and depression.

Aside from the sympathetic nervous system, the other two wings of the autonomic nervous system (ANS), which operate mostly below the level of consciousness to regulate many bodily systems and their responses to changing conditions are the parasympathetic nervous

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system (PNS) and the enteric nervous systems (which regulates the gastrointestinal systems). The PNS conserves energy in your body and is responsible for ongoing, steady-state activity. It produces the feeling of relaxation, of contentment, and is referred to as the “rest and digest” system, in contrast to the SNS (referred to as the “fight or flight” system). These two are connected like a seesaw: when one goes up, the other goes down. Activation of the PNS is the normal resting state of your body, brain and mind. Activation of the SNS is a change to the baseline PNS equilibrium, in order to respond to a threat or an opportunity. The PNS quiets the mind and fosters tranquility, which support contemplative insight. They evolved together to keep animals and humans alive in hostile environments.

The optimal state of balance between the PNS and the SNS requires:

- Mainly parasympathetic activation for a foundation of ease and peacefulness;
- Mild SNS activation for enthusiasm, vitality and wholesome passions;
- Occasional SNS spikes to deal with demanding situations.

### **Practicing Kriya Yoga with awareness with positive intentions to transform our minds and our brains and to avoid suffering**

By being in the present with whatever suffering, external or self-created within your mind, it will pass. Through training and shaping your mind and brain, you can even change what arises within, increasing what is positive and decreasing what is negative. While doing so, you can always take refuge in the ground of your being, your true Self, aware of what is aware. The goal is equanimity: not reacting to your reactions. Equanimity is an unusual brain state found in advanced yogis. Scientific studies of their brains reveals that it involves a combination of four neural conditions: (a) activation of the pre-frontal cortex area governing understanding and intention; (b) developing steadiness of the mind by increasing its sensitivity and appreciation to what is neutral, neither pleasant nor unpleasant; (c) cultivation of fast gamma-waves in large areas of the brain by creating the mental experience of great spaciousness; and (d) activation of the parasympathetic to dampen the limbic/SNS/HPAA feedback loops that would otherwise make the stress-response system react to its own reactions in vicious circles.

Initially, you may often forget to be aware; you become absorbed in the pain, or the self-created reactions. Later you begin to notice that your mind has taken you for a ride; but you are unable to stop it. As awareness, and aspiration to master the reactions grows, you may still feel the reaction, but you do not manifest it, choosing to remember what you will lose if you do. Finally, self-created reactions to external sources of suffering do not arise at all, and you calmly figure out how to manage them.

It takes time and some effort, with lots of little moments of practice to replace reactions of greed, impatience, desire, fear and hatred, which have left negative structures in the brain and mind, and to replace them with new ones, which involve generosity, kindness and wisdom.

The single most powerful way to reshape your brain and thus your mind is by developing greater control over your attention. Attention is like a spotlight, that which illumines streams into your mind and shapes your brain. When attention is steady, so is your mind: you can place it wherever you want and it stays there; when you want to shift it somewhere else, you can. Attention involves three competing aspects: holding onto information, updating awareness, and seeking stimulation. People vary a lot with regards to their tendencies towards each of these. For example, some persons like a lot of novelty and excitement, while others prefer predictability and quiet. Therefore, one should adapt ones meditation practices according to one's tendencies and challenges. For example, do you get tired easily when you try to concentrate? Or do you get easily distracted by sounds around you? Or do you need a rich diet of stimulation? Or a combination of these. Appreciate the fact that the various Dhyana kriyas in Babaji's Kriya Yoga will serve one in managing each of these tendencies.

The following practices in Kriya Yoga will, when done regularly, enable you to build new positiveneural structures and to maintain an optimal state of balance between the PNS and the SNS.

1. Kriya Kundalini Pranayama. Its long exhalation, in particular, activates the PNS;
2. While practicing asanas, emphasizing the exhalation, making it longer than the inhalation, while mentally visualizing the energy being directed through tight, resistant parts of the body;
3. “Letting go” of painful memories, and negative habitual thinking though the practice of the first Dhyana Kriya.
4. Developing positive visual images and emotions such as love, courage, and peace, during the practice of Kriya Dhyana Yoga, to balances the tendency of the mind's bias toward negative memories and worries; to build new positive neural structures.
5. By practicing the 18 asanas in pairs, activating the entire central nervous systems, and all members of the endocrine system, promoting optimal hormonal secretions, and assimilation with relaxation after each posture, and deep relaxation using the 18th posture.
6. Directing the flow of the circulation towards the head through inversion postures;
7. Directing the flow of prana towards the upper chakras with visualization and the breath during any of the 18 asanas of Babaji's Kriya Yoga.
8. Repeating the bija mantras regularly, to eliminate negative thinking, and to awaken the chakras;

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# Thinking outside the box to overcome your difficulties

By M. G. Satchidananda

## Two approaches to difficulties

When confronted with difficulties whose resolutions are perplexing, the typical response is to try to consider them as one would any problem, considering a mass of related details in the hope of finding a solution. A good analogy of this approach is to enter a labyrinth, and through trial and error, find the exit or end point. A lot of energy is expended as one reaches many dead ends, with resulting frustration and confusion.

Perplexing difficulties can never be gotten rid of if the mind broods on trying to get out of them; this habit of the mind only makes them recur without a solution and maintains the persistent tangle of a brooding mind. It is only from something above and outside the perplexities that the solution must come. In our analogy, by viewing the labyrinth from above, as a whole, one can find the way out. The difficulty of the physical mind – not the true thinking intelligence – is that it does not want to believe in this larger consciousness outside itself because

it is not aware of it; and it remains shut like a box in itself, not admitting the light that is all round it and pressing to get in. It is a subtle law of the action of consciousness that if you stress difficulties – you have to observe them, of course, but not stress them, they will quite sufficiently do that for themselves – the difficulties tend to stick or even increase; on the contrary, if you put your all on faith and aspiration and concentrate steadily on what you aspire to, sooner or later you will tend towards realization. It is the change of stress, a change in the poise and attitude of the mind, that most advances the process.

As for details, the method that the mind has concentrating on details and trying to put them right is a slow and tardy one; it has to be done, but more as a subordinate process, not the chief one. If it succeeds at all, it is because after some period of struggle and stress, something is released and there is an opening and the larger

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## Editorial *continued*

9. Using Arupa Dhyana Kriya to resolve problems, and to overcome emotion driven suffering, using the intellect, and intuitive wisdom.

10. Cultivating love and compassion through the practice of Kriya bhakti yoga, with devotional practices.

11. By practicing Yoga Nidra, to deeply relax and heal the body, the entire central nervous system and the brain.

12. By practicing concentration exercises such as Eka Rupa Dhyana Kriya, and mantra repetition, one avoids mental dispersion, and replaces it with inner joy.

13. By cultivating continuous awareness in daily life, with presence, equanimity and joy, as taught during the second initiation, and Nityananda Kriya.

14. By seeing the Divine in others, being empathetic and compassionate for their suffering.

15. By practicing those kriyas taught in the 3rd initiation, one enters into Samadhi, at will, slowing metabolic processes, and rejuvenating all systems, inducing fast gamma-waves in large areas of the brain; inducing identification with boundless awareness, replacing identification with the physical body and the movements of the mental and vital bodies.

16. By following a vegetarian diet, with protein at every meal, and lots of different vegetables, and anti-oxidant berries for your brain; avoid refined sugar and foods made from refined flour. High blood sugar wears down the hippocampus, leading to memory loss.

17. Avoid allergen foods to which you are sensitive, which cause an inflammatory reaction. The most common allergen type foods are milk and gluten grains and soy. To determine them, use blood tests, or try eliminating suspected ones from your diet for a week, and then notice if you feel better, think more clearly, digest more

easily, and have more energy. By avoiding other sources of inflammation: drugs, alcohol, tobacco.

**Science has determined that some supplements** promote the health of your brain; a good high potency multivitamin is recommended. So are Omega-3 fatty acids, which promote neuronal growth, mood elevation, and slowing of dementia. As a vegetarian get your Omegas from flax seed oil or even better Udo oil (1 tbs. per day) with at least 500 mg of DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). Vitamin E is the main anti-oxidant in the cellular membranes with your brain. One should take 400 IU of vitamin E daily, at least half of which contains the gamma-tocopherol form of Vitamin E, whose regular consumption has been shown to reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

## **Intention, exercising one's will, and perseverance**

One can facilitate the transformation of one's brain and mind by forming clear intentions to be equal-minded in the face of life's ups and downs, to replace negative emotions with their opposite, to apply the above practices, with auto-suggestions or affirmations. Compose them in short statements for a positive changes in your life, and repeat them daily when you are in a relaxed state, to replace the old negative programming in your subconscious mind. Exercise your willpower when you feel resistance to your intention; do not manifest negative emotions; observe them rising and passing away. Be patient with yourself when you slip up. If you do not give up, you are bound to succeed, and your failures become stepping-stones to success. Our brains, as with everything in Nature, is evolving. We can be conscious agents for positive changes in this evolution, bringing joy, love and wisdom into the world. □



## Overcome your difficulties *continued*

consciousness gets through and produces some general result. But the progress is much more rapid if one can make the opening the main thing and keep the dealing with details a something resultant and subordinate.

When there is this opening to what is above the mind, or the higher reaches of the mind, some essential progress can be made and then expressed and translated into details. This approach is contrary to allowing the mind to do what it is always trying to do: to handle details and construct out of them some general result. One can feel the essential change without its expressing itself in details; that is, one can feel a wide silent peace or state of freedom and joy and remain silent and secure in it without needing to translate it into sundry details.

There is above us, above the consciousness in the physical body, a great supporting extension as it were of peace, light, power, joy. It is not a theory but what one can realize in a very tangible way. As we become aware of it, aspire for its descent, and realize it more frequently, it will remain, and change the whole basis of our daily everyday state of mind. Even before we are aware of it above, we can suddenly feel it coming down and entering into us. The opening to it is made possible as the mind is made quiet and one cultivates an aspiration for its descent.

A quiet mind and persistent aspiration are the two main keys of yoga. A quiet mind is not necessarily motionless or silent, though it is good if one can have that at will. A quiet mind is one in which part of our consciousness stands back as an undisturbed observer of the movements passing through the rest of the mind. On the contrary, activity of the mind is a much slower process and does not by itself lead to these decisive results. It is the difference between a straight road and an approach through constant circles, spirals or meanders.

### **Question, record and interpret**

As students of Babaji's Kriya Yoga, some of the most important Dhyana Kriyas that are taught during the first initiation involve the development of intuition. Intuition is learning something new, without the use of the five senses. It involves an "opening" to a higher, wider consciousness above the physical consciousness. Intuition responds to questions. After years of schooling, however, many persons fear questions because of the pressure to find the "right" answer. Even worse, they do not transform doubts into questions, but instead allow doubts to turn them into cynics.

So when faced with difficulties, the intuitive, quiet mind approach discussed above, requires that one first boil them down into essential questions. A good question is one you intended to ask, and so it must fulfill three re-

quirements: (1) each question must be specific and unambiguous so that a precise answer is possible. Instead of asking: "Will it rain?" Ask "Will it rain tomorrow in Chicago?" (2) Each question should be simple, not compound. Otherwise your intuition may answer only the first part of your question. (3) Each question should be directly relevant to the issue you want to know about. Otherwise, answer may not address the specific difficulty you are facing.

After the mind is made quiet, then observe, record and interpret what comes to you in response to your questions. The language of intuition is usually symbolic or suggestive, and fragmentary, so don't expect that the response will be a simple "yes" or "no." "Yes" or "No" responses are too simplistic for a number of reasons: (a) Yes or no can change over time; (b) Yes or no can be subjective; and (c) an undesirable outcome can often be changed by changing the present. Instead, consider whether the response is generally positive or generally negative, and whether it refers to the past, the present or the future. Consider the polarity of the response. Here are some examples of polarities: hot / cold; up/down; greater/lesser; heavy/ light; light / dark, good/bad, better/worse; sooner/later. These time cues and polarities vary from person to person, so one needs to discover which time cues and polarities your intuitive impressions convey.

Expect that all of your thoughts, senses, feelings and memories are providing you with information about the question you are asking. Make note of the "sense" and impressions you get in response to a question. Unlike dreams, intuitive impressions are fragmentary. In traditional Western thought, answers follow questions. With intuition, questions follow answers. One question will lead to one or more impressions, which will suggest other images and other questions, which will in turn suggest yet other questions, even ones you have not thought to ask.

With intuition, one sense may be more trustworthy, depending upon whether you are a visual, auditory or a feeling type. If you can identify which one is more trustworthy, this is your intuitive "style" and you can interpret intuitive impressions with greater confidence. This style however, may vary depending upon whether your question relates to the past, the present or the future.

In observing impressions, you may recognize that some symbols may always mean the same thing. Recognizing these will also enable you to have more confidence in your interpretations.

With regular practice applying the above advice, in a quiet mind, you will learn to access intuitively the guidance you need to resolve perplexing difficulties. □

**"A quiet mind is one in which part of our consciousness stands back as an undisturbed observer of the movements passing through the rest of the mind."**



# Order of Acharya's: Annual report and plans for 2014

## Do Help to Bring Babaji's Kriya Yoga to others like you around the world

Order of Acharya's: Annual report and plans for 2014

Do Help to Bring Babaji's Kriya Yoga to others like you 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 twelve months, since September 2012 the Order of Acharyas did the following:

- Brought over 100 initiation seminars to more than 1,200 participants living in Dominican Republic, Brazil, India, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Reunion, Turkey, the Gulf states, Macedonia, Estonia, Spain, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, England, Australia, USA and Canada.

- Maintained an ashram and publishing office in Bangalore, India which organized a record number of ten initiation seminars all over India and developed and implemented an Ecommerce for its publications with online payment. Vinod Kumar, the ashram manager, conducted free daily public asana and meditation classes there, with biweekly free asana classes in local public schools. It published and distributed most of our books and tapes throughout India. It published a new 2nd edition of the Tirumandiram, with 3,770 pages in five volumes.

- Renovated the ashram in Dehiwala, Sri Lanka, where free public yoga classes and initiates satsangs are given weekly. The first and second initiation seminars were given there. At the Katargama ashram, we built an asana hall, a "cave shrine" to Babaji, and a shrine to the Siddhas. Published three of our books in Sinhala.

- Completed the training of one new Acharya in the USA: Vidhyananda (Sherry Ryan) and Austria: Brahmananda (Bernd Gehringer), and trained two acharyas to give the 2nd initiation: Siddhananda Sita of France and Nagaraj of Japan.

- Completed the superstructure of 12 apartments and the meditation hall of the ashram in Badrinath, Himalayas. Purchased 2,800 square feet of additional land adjacent to the ashram.

- Sponsored and organized a Gathering of initiates in Frankfurt, Germany of 50+ initiates and all 11 Acharyas from six countries in Europe.

- Sponsored free public classes in Babaji's Kriya Yoga, kirtans, silence retreats, and "rest and renew" personal retreats in 2013 at the Quebec ashram.

- Raised more than \$14,000 for the victims of the Hi-

malayan floods. Sponsored the village of Uchiwara, providing 2 months food supply to 135 families, and the funds to construct homes for 6 families.

- In the year 2013 - 2014 the Order plans to do the following:

- Bring initiation seminars to most of the above named countries,

- Conduct free bi-weekly public asana and meditation classes at our ashrams in Quebec, Bangalore and Dehiwala, Sri Lanka.

- Publish the 5,350 verses in 800 poems of the 18 Siddhas, along with a Guide book to the rare manuscripts

which since 2002, we have found in palm leaf manuscript libraries, scanned, preserved and transcribed.

- Publish The Voice of Babaji: Trilogy in Hindi. Publish the "Babaji and the 18 Siddha Kriya Yoga Tradition" in Marathi, Kannada and Malayalam.

- Continue the construction of the Badrinath ashram, expected completion in 2015.

**The 28 volunteer Acharyas of the Order and many other volunteer organizers need your support to fulfill this program for the year 2013-2014. Your contribution is tax deductible in Canada and the USA. Send it by December 31, 2013 if possible, and receive a receipt for your 2013 Income tax return. Use your credit card!**

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

For each donation of US\$70/Cn\$75 or more, receive a free copy of the new book, "Kriya Yoga Insights Along the Path," in English, French, German, Spanish or Portuguese, or "Babaji's Kriya Yoga: Deepening Your Practice" in English or French, "Kailash: In Quest of the Self" in English "A Yoga Toolbox for Shaping Your Future" in English. See our bookstore for a description of these. Donations may be made payable to "Babaji's Kriya Yoga Order of Acharyas", and sent by check, draft or money order to 196 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 90, Eastman, Quebec, Canada J0E 1P0, or paid by a VISA, Mastercard or American Express authorization by calling 1-888-252.9642 or outside North America +1-450-297.0258 fax: +1-450-297.3957 or make your contribution online here. If you are in Europe you may find it more convenient to send it by a bank transfer; for details on how to do this, go to <http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/kriya-yoga-contribution.htm>

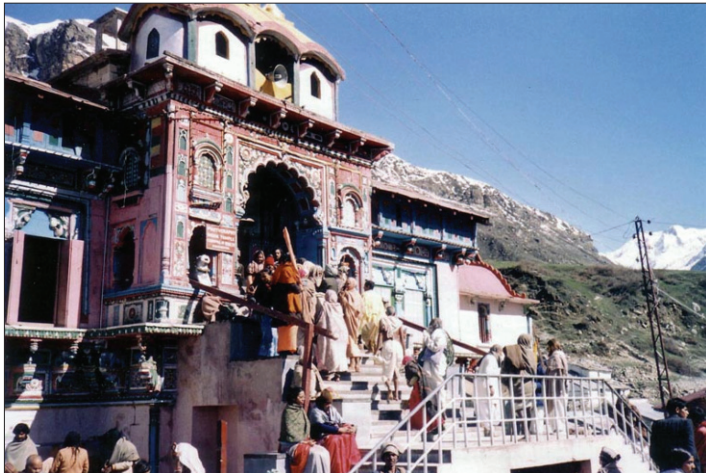




# Why build an Ashram in Badrinath?

By Durga Ahlund

The publicity is, "if heaven exists on earth, it is in Uttarakhand." A galaxy of mountain peaks and glaciers, frozen lakes and towering waterfalls, meandering rivers, verdant forests, rich with rare flora and fauna and vast



Babaji's Kriya Yoga Ashram in Badrinath.

colorful meadows and valleys make the Himalayan district the go to place for the adventurer, photographer and the spiritual seeker. It was the place where the Mahabharata was written and the Shashtras composed. Uttarkhand is one of India's newest states, carved out of its second largest: Uttar Pradesh. It includes eight hill districts, from its capital Dehradun in the south west to the sources of the Yamuna and Ganges rivers, Yamunotri, Gangotri in the north west, to the border of Nepal in the north east, and Nainital in the southeast. They are all wondrous place of pilgrimage. It is an area known since ancient times for divinity, austerity, meditation, penance and attainment. Uttarkhand is truly the land of the gods, a place of incredible beauty, simplicity, where only "complete surrender" is required to soar into the highest states of spiritual ecstasy. The temple and towns of Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri and Badrinath are the Chota Char Dhaam the four important pilgrimage sites of Uttarakhand, which are to be visited by all devout Hindus during their lifetime. However, for this non-Hindu self-seeker, there is but one glorious and sacred town to take into the mind and keep in the heart, and that is the small temple town of Badrinath.

Badrinath is situated along the Alaknanda River, the source of which is the glacial lake, Santapanth Tal. Two mountain peaks, the Nar and Narain Parvats stand guard over this temple town. Nilakantan Peak soars into the stars as if to signify its majesty and holiness. Neelakantan is like a shining crystal pyramid which changes hues with rise of the sun and moon. The land we purchased for Babaji's Kriya Yoga Ashram lies below the base of Neelakanth Peak.

The origin of the boldly colorful and soul-stirring shrine and temple of Badrinath is not clear. It may not

be only a Hindu shrine, but may have been Buddhist, and perhaps also Jain. Although references were made to the shrine and the temple in the Vedas, historical records are not available and no one really knows how old the Shrine or the temple is. The Skanda Puranas do credit Adi Shankara with the re-establishment of the Temple as Hindu in the 9th century A.D.. Legend has it that one day, as the Adi Shankara was climbing to a place for meditation near the village of Badrinath, he heard a celestial voice tell him where he would find the temple idol. He was told to dive into the Narada Kund just below the Badrinath Temple, to find and rescue the idol and to enshrine it again in the temple. Precisely where the voice instructed him, Adi Shankara found the murti. It was a statue of a yogi seated in meditation, made from a black stone.

The Temple complex is totally enchanting. A smile arises as you walk the flight of steps that leads to the brightly colored main gate and then onto the Garbhagriha, where the deity is enshrined. The murti of Lord Badri is inspiring and simple, a one-meter tall statue of the black shaligram stone. The statue is considered by many Hindus to be one of eight self-manifested statues of Vishnu. The murti depicts Vishnu sitting in meditative posture, rather than his far more typical reclining pose. The features of the murti are indistinct but looks very much like the form of the Bodhisatva, or Babaji, to some of us.

There are various legends regarding the origin of the murti and why he landed in the Narad Kund. Perhaps, the meditative murti had been enshrined by Buddhists who took over the temple in the days of King Ashok. At a later time, the murti was tossed into the Kund by Hindus who re-claimed the temple, until Adi Shankara re-enshrined him to his rightful place. According to Hindu belief, Buddha was the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, after all. Today, devotees of all faiths and schools of thought of Hinduism visit the Temple. They pray to Lord Badri Nath as Brahma, Hanuman, Kali or as Guru. Lord Badrinath is accepted as the Form of the Almighty, the All Pervading and All in One. In prayer devotees chant "Jai Badri Vishal Ki" The word vishal means huge, in Hindi and is indicative of the great significance of this Shrine. Many religious heads of various mutts, or monastic orders have their branch/guest houses in Badrinath.

Although Badrinath is located tucked deep into the Himalayas in Northern India, the head priest, or Rawal is traditionally a Brahmin from the southern district of Kerala, as required by the tradition begun by the Adi Shankara, who was from South India. Badrinath is one of the few temples of Northern India that follow the ancient Tantra Vidhi of Shrauta tradition, more common to South India.

Devotees to the Badrinath Temple also receive darshan (presence and blessings) from the sacred, Akhand Jyoti,

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## Badrinath ashram *continued*

the Eternal Flame. Akhand Jyoti is the ancient lamp that remains lit all throughout the year, even though the temple is closed during the winter months. Surely this ever-burning lamp is miraculous. Two thousand years ago, when Adi Shankaracharya re-established this temple, he created a perfect flammable mixture of herbs and ghee from cow's milk, (said today to still be prepared strictly by inhabitants of Mana village near Badrinath). This flammable concoction requires only a small amount of oxygen and gives out no carbon dioxide and keeps the lamp burning during the six long months of winter when the temple and town itself is closed.

The temple is open only six months every year (between the end of April and the beginning of November), due to extreme weather conditions in the Himalyan region.

The endless cold of the town is made more appealing with the presence of a natural thermal hot spring, the Tapt Kund (hot spring), just below the temple and above the Alaknanda River. Here devotees take a holy bath to purify themselves before entering the Temple and paying homage to Lord Badrinarayan. The water in the Tapt Kund is extraordinarily hot. It's medicinal and healing properties lure devotees to linger in the steaming water. There are separate baths for men and for women.

The people of Badrinath are all descendants of rishis. These strong people are predominately subsistence farmers. Mana village is another wonderful place to visit and sit for meditation as the atmosphere there is deeply peaceful and appears otherworldly. It is about four kilometers from Badrinath and is a comfortable walk. Mana is the last Indian village up against the Tibet border.

Mana was known as Manibhadrashram in Hindu scriptures. The cave called Vyasa Gufa is in Mana. This is where Ved Vyasa dictated his famous epic, The Mahabharata to his secretary, Ganesh. The cave is tucked underneath a huge slab of stone and enshrined is a marble statue of Vyasa writing with a marble pen on a marble book. There are many ancient caves in the area used for centuries by various sages and yogis. The Saraswati River emerges here from a lateral glacier, which is about 3 kilometers north of Mana near the Tibet border. The Puranas describe the Saraswati as it flows down the Mana village and touches Vyasa Gufa and then loses herself in the Alaknanda. There is an amazing natural bridge, a huge slab of stone, over which one can stand in amazement at the Saraswati as she rushes upward through a sculptured gorge.

Another natural phenomenon to view is at Vasudhara Falls about 5 kilometers from Mana. The walk is a steep and difficult hike after the first 2 to 3 kilometers. The falls itself are 400 feet high and the scenery along the way is spectacular. Inspiring are the mountain vistas of Nilakanth, Chaukambha and Santopanth.

The villagers of Mana are important to the activities of Sri Badrinath Temple and the annual worship of Mata Murti. On the closing day of the temple in early November, the people of Mana offer a choli, a short sweater to

the deity to keep Him warm during the winter months. The choli is woven by unmarried girls in the village. Mana village is known for its beautiful spun wool and woven crafts.

The people of Mana live a simple and seemingly ancient lifestyle. These people are charming and look rather more Tibetan than Indian. These villagers may have been Rajputs, but are called Bhotias. Most Bhotias in other parts of India are Buddhist but these villagers are Hindus who live in a rather rigid caste system. The younger generations, now educated, often move away from this subsistence farming village to take jobs mostly in government services. During the winter months, the villagers of Badrinath and Mana, along with a murti of Lord Badrinarayan, move south to Joshimath, (where the Adi Shankara did tapasya and established his first monastery).

Let it be understood that a visit to Badrinath valley is an ethereal experience, situated at more than 10,000 feet, it first appears overwhelming in its beauty and grandeur – the vastness of the mountains and the sky and the remoteness of this place at the top of the world. There are so few thought forms here that one merely has to sit still for a few moments to quiet the mind and drop into a deep and peaceful meditation. The sound and vibration of Aum seems to hum through the air, the wind, your breath. Subtle channels are cleared of negativity and take in the Aum. You seem to acclimate easily to the lessening oxygen content in the air even as you hike higher on the mountain paths. When you practice Yoga you experience it in a way you rarely can elsewhere.

The trip up to Badrinath is never easy, always intense, as the route winds precariously between steep mountains ledges and rocky riverbanks. It is a dangerous route, perilous in rainy weather with landslides that occur without warning. But the travel to reach this place is part of experience of Badrinath. The journey up prepares you for the sacred and profound. It is a way of surrender, a way of accepting life anew. Badrinath exists as if to spiritualize your existence. The longer you stay in its atmosphere, the deeper is your transformation and the longer it stays with you after you leave. There is no need to be a Hindu to make the journey here. Badrinath allows for maximum freedom and flexibility in matters of the sacred and profound. It simply is sacred and profound. There is no rigid dogma to adhere to, you don't even have to step into the Temple, you merely have to be willing to let go of any skepticism and rigidity within your ego and allow your soul to step forward into the Presence, that is Badrinath, and let the transformation begin.

On June 17, 2013, monsoon rains 4.5 times greater than ever recorded before caused devastating floods in the upper regions of Uttarkhand, particularly at Kedarnath, Uttarkashi, Pithogarth and Chamoli. These caused the death of more than 10,000 people and left tens of thousands of residents stranded in the upper areas of Ut-

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# News and Notes

**Request for contributions for victims of floods in the Himalayas, near Badrinath** The Board of Directors of our charities in India, Canada and USA resolved on June 28 to or-



Flooding in Badrinath.

ganize a fundraising campaign for the victims of the floods in the vicinity of Badrinath, Garwhal, Himalayas, India. Our ashram manager, Rohit Naithani, distributed food to more than 5,000 stranded pilgrims every day during the first 10 days following the storm on June 17 which dumped 4.5 times more rain than in the previous record rainfall. More than 10,000 persons lost their lives throughout the Himalayan region as a result of the ensuing floods. Many more have lost their homes and agricultural fields. Since then, we have raised more than \$14,000 in relief funds. On September 24, Rohit returned from Joshimutt, where he went to organize the distribution of funds. Local officials have recommended that we sponsor the village of Uchiwara, where 135 families are

living in very difficult conditions. Midway between Pipalkoti and Joshimutt, one can find the beginning of the footpath that leads to Uchiwara, 20 km away on a remote mountainside. By the end of September, about \$3,000 of our funds will be used to purchase large food packets for each of these 135 families. Six families will also receive \$1,500 in three installments to build a two room dwelling. We request that during the coming days, weeks and months, that you send contributions to Babaji's Kriya Yoga Order of Acharyas by credit card at <http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/kriya-yoga-contribution.htm> from anywhere in the world, and in Europe by bank transfer to "Marshall Govindan", Deutsche Bank, International, BLZ 50070024, account number: 0723106, re. IBAN DE09500700240072310600, BIC/Swift code DEUTDE33HAN, and by residents of India to Demand Draft or cheque payable to "Babaji's Kriya Yoga Trust," sent to the Trust's , postal address: Babaji's Kriya Yoga Post Box No. 5608 Malleshwaram West Bangalore 560 055 India, or by funds transfer to Punjab National Bank, St. Peters Pontifical Seminary Branch, Account name: Babaji's Kriya Yoga Trust, Savings Account Number: 126 10 10 1000 544 76 RTGS / NEFT Code: PUNB 046 2500. Mention that it is for the Himalayan flood victims.

**Badrinath ashram construction status report** Over 20 laborers were able to complete the superstructure for the meditation hall and twelve apartments before the rains washed away a 4.5 km (3 mile) section of the

road between Joshimutt and Badrinath. Work is expected to resume on October 6, and continue until the end of October, when the arrival of winter will again force the construction to come to a halt. We expect to resume the construction in mid May 2014, and to complete the meditation hall and at six to twelve apartments by the fall of 2014, when another pilgrimage is scheduled.

**Pilgrimage to South India and Sri Lanka**, December 30, 2013 to January 15, 2014 with Satyananda. This is the first pilgrimage we are organizing to Sri Lanka. After visiting Bangalore, Puttaparthi, Tiruvannamalai, Pondicherry and Chennai, the group will fly to Colombo, Sri Lanka, and then visit Kandy, Katargama, Bentota, and Dehiwala. For details go to: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pilgrimages-srilanka.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pilgrimages-srilanka.htm)

**Pilgrimage to South India** February 14 to March 3, 2014, with M. G. Satchidananda and Durga, including ashrams and temples in Bangalore, Tiruvannamalai, Pondicherry, Tanjore, Palani, Coimbatore and Mysore. Daily group practice For details: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pilgrimages.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/pilgrimages.htm)

**Pilgrimage to Badrinath in the Himalayas**, September 24 to October 12, 2014. Join us for an life changing, unforgettable pilgrimage to the place where Babaji attained soruba samadhi, the ultimate state of enlightenment. Travelling by bus from New Delhi, we will visit Rishikesh,

*Continued on Page 12*

## Badrinath ashram *continued*

tarkhand without homes, farmland and means of livelihood. More than 60,000 visitors had to be rescued by the army. It seems as though Mother Nature wanted to remove many tourist facilities that have been built in these sacred places in recent years. But the valley of Badrinath was untouched; and there was no damage to our ashram. Only the road to it from Joshimutt, was severely damaged. One might doubt the wisdom of our efforts since

2008 to build a Babaji's Kriya Yoga ashram in Badrinath. But the decision to purchase land and erect an ashram did not seem to come by choice; it came quite spontaneously from coincidence and opportunity, which rarely arises in Badrinath. And so we continue to build so that kriyabans will have an opportunity to do Kriya in Badrinath and experience the transformation that Babaji and Lord Badri Nath affords one and all. □



## News and notes *continued*

Rudraprayaga, Joshimutt, Badrinath, and Haridwar. We will have group practice of Babaji's Kriya Yoga at least twice a day in all of these places. Visit the new ashram in construction at Badrinath, where we will have a mantra yagna. See the details at: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/Pilgrimages-himalayas.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/Pilgrimages-himalayas.htm)

**Second level initiations** will be given by M.G. Satchidananda in Quebec October 25-27, 2013; and June 20-22, 2014.

**Third level initiations** will be offered with M. Govindan Satchidananda; in Quebec July 11-20, 2014; and Estonia August 14-21, and Dole France, August 25 to September 1, 2014. Attain the goal of Self-realization with powerful kriyas to awaken the chakras and to go into the breathless state of samadhi.

**Kriya Hatha Yoga Teacher Training** will be offered at the Quebec Ashram, June 27 to July 7, 2014.

**Reset and Renew at the Quebec Ashram:** live a unique spiritual experience at the Quebec Ashram. You may spend a few days, a few weeks or even a few months with guidance in your Sadhana (spiritual practices from Kriya Yoga Acharya Dayananda). Enrollment in advance is required. Two days and two nights minimum. With lodging and food including: \$65 per day; without food: \$30 per day. Contact: [Dayanada@babajiskriyayoga.net](mailto:Dayanada@babajiskriyayoga.net)

**Tirumandiram:** A second edition, in five volumes, with a total of 3,770 pages, is now available for order at: [www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm). The Tirumandiram, by Siddha Tirumular is a sacred, monumental work of philosophical and spiritual wisdom rendered in verse form. Encyclopedic in its vast scope, and written nearly 2,000 years ago., it is one of India's greatest texts, a spiritual treasure-trove, a Sastra containing astonishing insight. It is a seminal work and is the first treatise in Tamil that deals with different aspects of Yoga, Tantra and Saiva Siddhanta. It took five years and a team of scholars to translate each of its more than

3,000 verses and to write extensive commentaries about them, in nine chapters, known as tandirams. This classic text contains five volumes. Each volume contains two tandirams and each verse includes the original Tamil language script, its transliteration in Roman characters, its English translation and a commentary elucidating the meaning of each verse. The last volume also contains presentations from two philosophical schools of Saiva Siddhanta, a glossary, a select bibliography and index.

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