



B a b a j i ' s

Kriya Yoga Journal

Editorial

Being and doing in the Presence

By M. G. Satchidananda

We recently returned from two months in India, most of which was at the Kumba Mela in Haridwar. It was indeed a blessing for me to be in the company of tens of thousands of sadhus, holy renunciants, millions of devotees, and more than 200 Kriya Yoga initiates who traveled from more than 15 countries and from all over India. It was truly wonderful to shift gears from "doing" to "being." The entire time at the Kumba Mela was all about being in "The Presence," and That

was palpable, given the presence of so many extra-ordinarily beings.

The spiritual path begins with a seeking for "special" spiritual experiences. Like most human effort, it is motivated by the vital body's need to find some delight, however unintelligent the impulse or desire may be. For those with a strong ego, it soon becomes a seeking to "be special," or to seek recognition from others that one is somehow better, worthy of admiration, or simply a need to be loved. However, as one

progresses along the path, one realizes that because "I am not the body," "I am not the emotions, the desires, the thoughts," but that I am truly only Pure Consciousness, there is a radical turn towards to the formless Being at one's center, and away from the impulse to find something new and different out there in the world! One realizes that seeking to be special or having special experiences only creates separation, as the mind divides the One again into the many, and takes one away from Enlightenment, continuous effulgent self-awareness.

We were constantly reminded of this truth by the sadhus at the Kumba Mela. We sat with an extraordinary naga baba at the Juna Akhada camp, where I had taken the noted "Evolutionary Enlightenment" teacher, Andrew Cohen and his party. He appeared to be about 50 years old. He was about 6 foot, 6 inches tall, very thin, but muscular, and completely naked. When I enquired as to his age, he told me that he was "93" and that he had lived as a Naga baba since he was 20 years old. A few days later, when another group of us returned,

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I asked the same baba to tell us some story from his life. He paused, and looked down at the small camp fire in front of him that he was stirring and stoking and replied "this is my life." Meaning, this is it; this is all that is of any importance for him. No need to recall the past; no need to seek to fulfill any new desire. Just Be Here Now turning the ashes of the fire.

We sat with another naked Naga Baba, from Himal Pradesh, in the high Himalayan range. In response to my enquiry, he told us that he was 73 years old, though he appeared to be only about 45. I asked him how he had managed to overcome "fear." He replied he had no fear because he had never done anything wrong. It was a simple lesson about doing, or "karma," the doctrine that actions, words and thoughts have consequences, and that if we are careful about them, there is nothing to fear. "Doing" and "Being," sat and karma are closely related, at least for the enlightened. For the typical Westerner however, who is constantly "doing," motivated by the vital's impulses and desires, "Being" is quite foreign. When one begins to follow a spiritual path, however, it becomes the goal. But, paradoxically, it is never very far away. This Naga baba was in very simple language indicating that if you want to "Be" more, you need to make sure that all of your actions (and thoughts and words) are true and good. Purification. This was not a moral or theoretical truth for him. He had no possessions, not even clothing. He had nothing to lose, no regrets, no guilt, and therefore nothing to fear.

Simple living and high thinking

The example of such renunciants speaks volumes. We who have adopted the Western, materialist, consumer culture, with all of our material comforts and concerns, ridden by crises, need to take to heart the value of "simple living and high thinking," a prescription often repeated to us by my teacher. As a young man, he had embraced it when he became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. And because of this, he also asked us to wear simple, unstitched handspun khadi cloth, particularly when we were in India, which is the attire of Gandhians, and to adopt a simple life style: sleeping on the floor, vegetarian diet, eating with our fingers, centering our lives around yogic sadhana, but also making our contribution to society. He often said, Babaji loves the sadhus, but because they renounce the world, He cannot work through them. My teacher was therefore, like Gandhi, also, a man of action, a karma yogi. While he had many material things, they were all things whose purpose served his mission. He had no need for entertainment or diversion. To the end of his life, I perceived a consistency in his embrace of Gandhi's prescription.

I continue to draw inspiration from him in my own life. Our possessions should serve our purpose, otherwise the reverse occurs, and we become slaves to our possessions, the desire for more of them, and the debt

required to pay for them. The many crises facing the world today are the result directly or indirectly of ignoring this truth.

The practice of meditation, especially those taught in Babaji's Kriya Yoga first initiation is the key to "letting go" of what does not serve our purpose, our dharma, our manifestation of the True, the Good, the Beautiful, the Beatitude in our lives.

Satsang: sharing of truth

The Kumba Mela is undoubtedly the largest human assembly in the world. Its purpose includes satsang, a Sanskrit word which means, "sharing of truth." In this extraordinary gathering, it was easy to maintain a high level of awareness, to be fully present, moment to moment. But you do not have to go to the Kumba Mela to have satsang. Whenever "two or more are gathered in my name" said Jesus, there I am also. Jesus was not referring, of course to his physical presence, or his personality, but to his true identity, Pure Consciousness. When "two or more" gather together "in my name" meaning for the purpose of remembering that which is sacred, what happens? One's consciousness moves to a higher level, away from the vital's desires, and towards the soul's aspiration for the True, the Good, the Beautiful, the Beatific. This is why is it so important for everyone on a spiritual path to not become completely isolated, but to meet and be present in the company of like minded souls. The activity may include group meditation, reading of sacred literature, chanting or singing, prayer, discussion, yoga postures. But regardless of the activity, the essential element is to cultivate the Witness consciousness, by being fully present, moment to moment.

During the Kumba Mela, our Kriya Yoga sadhaks met for four hours every morning in our camp to practice the five fold path of Babaji's Kriya Yoga: asanas, pranayama, meditation, bandahs, mantras, bhakti. And again most evenings for a couple of hours. We had a large tent, about 110 feet by 25 feet, with a 28 foot flat metal ceiling. It was over 2 miles (about 3 km) from our hotel, so we did a lot of walking, back and forth twice a day, through the camps of sadhus and naga babas. In the afternoons, there was free time to walk even more, visiting various camps of sadhus. I gave at least one talk every day on a different topic, related to the Kumba Mela, but the central theme of all them was the opportunity that we now have, beginning at the Kumba Mela, to establish ourselves upon the spiritual path, "being calmly active and actively calm." While there is much to admire in the path of renunciation, our visit with them is not about having a new special experience, or about finding someone who is going to make us enlightened, or about becoming special. Quite the opposite, it is about realizing, moment to moment, the Presence. God is not absent; we are absent, when

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The Kumba Mela and its ascetics, or . . .

Why pilgrimage is not a tourist trip (Part 2)

By M. G. Satchidananda

Sects and sampradayas or orders of ascetics

1. Dasanamis or Sankara Saiva ascetics. Sankara acharya, as indicated at the end of Part 1 of this article, in the last issue of the Journal, organized Saiva ascetics into ten orders, known as sampradayas. During the course of his short life of 32 years, he accomplished an amazing amount of work. Through his writings, travels, public debates with teachers of competing religious sects and philosophies he gave Buddhism its final defeat in India, and reformed and organized Hinduism in a way which persists to the present time. Himself an ascetic, he renounced the world at an early age, in what is southwest India, Kerala. Sankara acharya established monastic centers in Badri in the north, Dwarka in the west, Sringeri in the south, and Puri in the east. They are known respectively as Jyoti or Joshi, Sarada, Sringeri and Govardhan. He arranged the Saiva ascetics in ten orders and named them: (1) Aranya, (2) Asrama, (3) Bharati, (4) Giri, (5) Parvata, (6) Puri, (7) Sarasvati, (8) Sagara, (9) Tirtha, and (10) Vana. Every Samnyasi adds to his adopted name one of these ten terms as a suffix, the particular term depending on the centre to which he is initiated or to which he is attached and more specifically on the name of his preceptor. It is not known how this was done exactly. By one account, these names are to be traced to the names of the ten disciples of Sankara's four disciples, whom he sent to the four quarters.

The above mentioned ten orders have a specific alignment with monastic centers. The center near Badrinath, Joshi mutt, has assigned to it the three orders known as Giri, Parvata, and Sagara. The Sarada center in Dwarka has assigned to it the orders of Asrama and Tirtha. Bharathi, Puri and Sarasvati are attached to the Sringeri center in the south. Aranya and Vana orders are attached to the Govardhan monastery at Puri. Sankara acharya had in mind not only the organization of the samnyasis but also the spiritual welfare of the Indian population, because to each was assigned

specific territories. Each one of the four monastic centers has its own special tutelary male and female deities as well: Joshi center of Badri has Narayana and Purnagiri (a rather unfamiliar goddess). Generally Dasanamis greet each other by saying: "Namah Narayanaya" (meaning "bow to Narayana"). But the Dandis, and only the Brahmin Dasanamis of the orders Asrama, Bharati, Sarasvati and Tirtha use a different greeting: "Namah Shivaya" ("bow to Shiva"). Two well known forms of Siva and Parvati known as Siddhesvara and Bhadrakali preside over the Sarada center. Kamakshi, also identified with Sarada is the female goddess at Sringeri, and Sankara built a beautiful temple for her there. Adivaraha, the third incarnation of Vishnu, is the male deity. Jagannatha, a form of Vishnu, is the male deity at Puri along with the goddess Vimala. Although the Dasanami Samnyasis, who are followers of the monistic form of Vedanta known as Advaita, as taught by Sankar acharya, meditate on the formless Supreme Being, but accept worship of various aspects of the Deity in more or less human form. It is characteristic of the Hindu religious synthesis, that even Sankar acharya, the great logician and metaphysician, prescribed worship of gods human forms as a step towards final spiritual realization.

Each of the four centers was assigned a different meditative formula, or aphorism, expressing the truth of pure monism: (1) Joshi Math had "Ayam Atma Brahma," (This Self is Brahma), (2) Sarada Math had "Tat Tvam Asi," (That Thou Art or That is Thou), (3) Sringeri Math had "Aham Brahma Asmi," (I am Brahma). (4) Govardhana Math had the most impersonal and abstract: "Prajnanam Brahma," (True Knowledge is Brahma). These four Mahavakyas or great sayings occur in one sentence in the Hayagrivopanisad.

It is the aspiration of most Samnyasis to visit all of the well known places of Hindu pilgrimage from one end of the country to the other, at the least, once. It is compulsory that the Samnyasis attend the Kumba Mela. It is their belief that the nectarine waters of the sacred rivers mysteriously come together on certain auspicious dates and times. It acquires greater religious significance for lay persons who have the opportunity to be present with such great saints.

The Dasanamis are distinguished by the color of their clothes, which is ochre, representing renunciation, and a forehead mark or tilak consisting of three, sometimes two horizontal stripes made from sacred ash, vibhuti, on the forehead. Not only them, but all kinds of Saiva ascetics are distinguished from followers of Vishnu in this way. The latter, known as Bairagis,

Editorial *continued*

we forget to live in the present moment, with deep appreciation for the miracle which is life. Our visit is to teach us that when we return to "doing" in the West, that we remember "Who Am I" and to aspire to surrender to the Divine, so that our potential may be realized, as instruments serving His purpose. Our place of work, our professions, our families, our friends and communities, are our field of endeavor for realizing His purpose. □



The Kumba Mela *continued*

wear saita or white color, and a forehead mark of one or three vertical lines. Ideally the mark is made on thirty two different parts of the body. Every novitiate at his initiation has his head shaved. The majority then allow their hair and beards to grow, allowing them to form matted locks on the shoulders, or wound into a ball on crown of the head. They are also distinguished by wearing rudraksha bead necklace rosaries. These may also be worn on various parts of the body. They also may carry a water pot, known as a kamandalu and or a bowl, for receiving of alms.

Generally aspirants may be initiated into these orders when they reach the age of adulthood, or near it. They generally belong to one of three caste groups: Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya. Members of the low caste, Sudras, are commonly relegated to the section called "Naga," "naked and fighting." Women, never to have been ordained into any of the orders by Sankara acharya, have since been ordained, however they are still a small minority. The candidate fasts; their head is shaved, and then the ceremony begins with the worship of Ganesa. The initiation is generally conducted in waste deep waters. The candidate must strip naked and take seven steps. Then, a shraddha, a funeral type ceremony, is conducted. This symbolizes virtual death to worldly life, and rebirth into spritual life. After midnight a sacrificial fire ceremony known as Viraja is performed. The novitiate is told that he has five teachers to revere and take lessons from: (1.) the ochre-colored garment, (2) the removal of the hair, (3) Vibhuti ash, (4) the Rudraksha rosary, and (5) the mantra received from the preceptor. The mantra is one of the four aphorisms or Mahavakyas mentioned above. Then a new ascetic name is given to the novitiate. While a danda or staff is given, it is not included in the list of five teachers. Before applying the ash to the forehead of the novitiate, the preceptor bows down before the novitiate. One then enters the first stage as a novitiate. At a later stage the preceptor may or may not assign the disciple to the stage of Digambara (sky clad) meaning they join the Naga section of naked ascetics.

A Dasanami may live at one place or may go on wandering. If he chooses to stay at one place it is generally a monastery belonging the Dasanami order. If he wanders he is generally not supposed to remain in one place more than three days. He may resort to Saiva monasteries if available, otherwise he has to beg for food. On occasions of religious significance they may travel in groups of tens or twenties. In places of pilgrimage, devotees have established rest houses known as Dharmasalas or Annachatras where such ascetics get shelter and are given appropriate food. Those who reside in monasteries attend to the worship of the deity there, practice their mantra, study, and if they are at a senior stage, offer religious discourse. The practice of yoga asanas or postures is forbidden for Dasanamis because it implies a preoccupation with the needs of the physical body and identity.

Aside from the four mutts or monasteries the Dasanamis have important monasteries in Haridwar, Rishikesh, Vrindavan, Prayag, Benares, Ujjain, Girnar and near Nasik. The abbots are appointed by their predecessors or elected by his disciples. They all have substantial property to administer, publish religious and philosophical literature, and engage in teaching language. They feed visiting samnyasis as well as civilian visitors and beggars if they arrive at meal time. Hospitality is one of their distinguishing marks. There are records of some mutts engaged in such educational and charitable activities all the way back to the eleventh century. They are therefore part of the backbone of the Sanatana Dharma, "the eternal truth" as conveyed through the rich tapestry of the Hindu tradition.

2. Dasanami Nagas or Militant Samnyasis

Many extreme sections of ascetic orders in the Saiva, Bairagi and Jain traditions observe life long nakedness as part of their ascetic discipline. They are referred to as Nagas. References to such ascetics are as far back as the Rg Veda, the oldest religious text of the Hindu tradition. There are also references to the erect genitals of Siva in the Rg Veda, and since that time the Linga, as a representation of Siva's erect genitals has been worshipped. The Naga class of Samnyasis has long been known for its use of weapons of offence and defense. In the year 1266 A.D. traditional history records a decisive victory by Naga Samnyasis over Bairagis (Vishnava) ascetics. In the 16th century, Madhusaudan Sarasvati, a famous ascetic writer on monistic Vedanta, organized the first corps of ascetic fighters, with the permission of the Muslim emperor Akbar, to defend ascetics from militant muslim ascetics known as fakirs. To recruit sufficient numbers, he had to go beyond the three upper castes, to the Sudra caste, and it is from this period that some orders of Dasanamis are considered to be "impure." In 1760, at Haridwar, Naga Saiva Samnyasis scored a decisive victory over Vaishnava Bairagis after a huge battle over which group should have precedence in the processions during the Kumba melas. Until the British took control of the area, decades later, Bairagis were not allowed to even visit it during religious festivals. Since that time, the Naga Samnyasis lead the processions. Another account records how five thousand Saiva ascetics died in a battle with Sikh ascetics in 1796 at Haridwar. The Naga Samnyasis were also formed into armies of mercenaries by Hindu warrior chieftans who fought the Muslim rulers during the middle ages. In their monasteries in Haridwar and other places, one can still see hanging on the walls rusting weapons of all types hanging on the walls. This aspect of their history is not unlike that of the Christian militant orders, the Templars, who fought the Muslims during the Crusades from the eleventh to

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The Kumba Mela *continued*

thirteenth centuries. Unfortunately, when the British began to rule India in the late 18th century, they tried to force the Nagas to wear some cloth around their genitals. But even the British could not succeed in banning their nakedness during their processions at the Kumba melas.

The traditional name given to the Naga Samnyasis organizations is *akhada* or "military regiment." Today, while there are about six *akhadas*, only some sections of some of these are made up of Nagas, or naked ascetics. Before describing these, it is important to note that membership in these is independent of which of the ten orders of *Dasanamis*, described above, one may belong to, although there may be some parallels.

(1) The Juna *akhada* as it is now known, or "old" *akhada*, has as its deity, Dattatreya, an aspect of Vishnu. It was formerly called the Bhairava *Akhada*, and Bhairava is an aspect of Siva, so it derives from an old Saivite order of ascetics, the *Kapalikas*, who were yogis. It has a section of female naked ascetics known as *Avadhutinis*. Its principle *mutt* is in Benares with branches in Haridwar, Prayag, Ujjain and near Nasik. Today, it includes an estimated 500,000 ascetic members, making it the largest; (2) The *Avahana Akhada* is considered to be the oldest, founded in 547 A.D. (3) The *Niranjani Akhada*, founded in 907 A.D., its deity is Skanda, the god of war, centered at Prayag. (4) The *Ananda Akhada* founded in 856 A.D. with fire as its deity. (5) The *Mahanirvani akhada*, centered in Benares fought and saved Benares from destruction by the army of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1684. It worships the great sage Kapila, who developed *Samkhya* philosophy. (6) Attached to it is the small *akhada*, the *Atal*, which worships Ganapati, centered in Benares. There are other smaller *akhadas* as well. There are also sub-sections of each of the *akhada*.

Membership in the *akhadas* determines one's place during the processions of *sadhus* during the Kumba melas. The Nagas go first. Anyone who breaches the order of precedence may expect to be soundly thrashed by them. They do not like to be photographed either, so if one attempts to do so, it should be done discretely, at a distance, otherwise the Nagas may grab and destroy one's camera, or worse. The presence of the Indian army not only ensures order among the pilgrims, but helps to prevent an outbreak of sectarian conflict as described above.

The Nagas concentrate mostly on physical penance: difficult postures, holding their arms upright for many years, sitting in the sun within a circle of camp fires, in order to become insensitive to physical pain. This is their path to salvation. While the Naga section was largely recruited from the *Sudra* caste, and physical effort prescribed over mental exertion, they had an advantage in fighting the Muslims, as militant mercenaries. But this left them unprepared to engage in philosophical debates in new languages with Christian missionaries. So, the Nagas recruited learned

Paramahamsas from other high caste *Dasanmis* orders to assume their leadership. True to their ideals of transcending caste, some Brahmins did ignore common prejudices. They became known as *Mandalesvaras*, or "commissioners" and today they number over 100 throughout the *akhadas*. Their own preceptors, are known as *Mahamandalesvars*. An acquaintance of this author, Dr. Ushbard Arya, a former professor of Sankrit at the University of Minnesota, and disciple of Swami Rama, became such a *Mandalesvara* of an *akhada* a few years ago. Such *Mandalesvaras* are already prominent personages, with *Samnyasis* disciples and an *ashram* or *sthana* (center). When appointed to this position, they are recognized as a spiritual preceptor of the *akhada*. They are responsible for teaching the doctrines of the *akhada*, as an *acharya*.

The head of an *akhada*, like the head of a monastery (*Matha* or *mutt*) is called a *Mahant*. During the procession they usually ride on top of an elephant, bannered with the insignia of their *akhada*, followed by their disciples, some of whom may carry spears or ride horses. All *Mahants* have a camp at the Kumba Mela, and while they all have an ochre colored banner at the entrance, only the camps of the *Mahants* of *Akhada* have lances stuck in the ground and distinct flags with their insignia at their entrances, indicating their fighting function.

3. *Kanphata Yogis*

The names of this sect of ascetics, the *Yogis*, or *Jogis*, usually end in *Natha*. This is because most of them recognize *Goraknath*, the author of the *Hathayoga Pradipika* as the founder of their sect. They are called *Goraknathis*. Not all *Goraknathis* are celibate ascetics. Many are householders. While they worship Siva, and in their appearance, besmeared with ash, wearing ochre and *rudraksha* garlands, and the *Saiva tilak*, they may be indistinguishable from the *Dasanamis* orders, philosophically they are far apart. They are *Tantric Samnyasis*. They emphasize the practice of various yogic techniques, and *tapas* (intensive practice) for the acquisition of *siddhis* (powers) unlike *Dasanamis* whose philosophy is monistic *Vedanta* (*Advaita*) and who revere *Sankara acarya*. The *Yogis* represent the oldest school of Indian ascetism. They have so many features in common with the ancient *Kapalikas*, wandering *tantric* ascetics.

Gorakh was a miracle worker and extraordinary teacher, who probably lived no later than 1200 A.D. His principle literary work, the *Goraksasatak*, is a mixture of *Yoga* and *Tantra* doctrines. *Yoga* was defined more than a thousand years before *Gorakh* by *Patanjali* in his *Yoga Sutras*, and is referred to repeatedly even earlier in the older *Upanishads*, and succinctly summarized in the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is generally called *Raja Yoga*, as opposed to *Hatha Yoga*. The end of *Hatha Yoga*

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The Kumba Mela *continued*

is considered to be mystic powers. Gorahk must have derived his doctrine of Hatha Yoga from the doctrine of nadis, chakras and kundalini of Tantra and his teacher Matsyendrenath, and like other doctrines throughout Tantra, seeks to awaken the serpent power Kundalini and the psycho-energetic centers, the chakras, through breath control, producing occult powers.

The Nathapanthis, or followers of Gorahk can be distinguished in appearance from other Saiva Samnyasis. They wear ochre, unlike Vaishnava's. They carry a bowl without a handle, often a coconut shell, proclaiming its descent from the human skull. Around their neck is a sacred thread, two feet in length, made of black sheep wool, in its center a single Rudraksha bead, and a whistle, made from the horn of a deer or rhinoceros, which is blown only at the beginning of a meal. Together these three articles are called a saili. They may also wear one or two rosaries made of crystal (sphatika) beads, and carry a pair of long iron tongs. They also wear large ear rings or ear discs in the hollow of the ear. At the last stage of their initiation, the preceptor drives a large knife through this part of each ear, and when the wound heals, the rings, called mudras, which may be as large as seven inches, are inserted. The group name of this order of ascetics, Kanphata is derived from these ear-rings. They often consume large quantities of intoxicating herbs, or smoke ganja, to make up for deficiencies in their practice of yoga. They are for the most part vegetarian, but fast only on Mahashivaratri. They are renowned for their wandering, and aspire to circumnavigate the entire length of the Narmada River, barefooted, without money.

Some Nathas live in one of their numerous monasteries, known as akhadas, but no such monastery lies south of Nasik/Bombay, nor east of Benares. The growth of Vaishnava sects and Islam checked their growth to the south and east.

In the monastery, often situated near cremation grounds, the chief deity worshipped is Bhairava, an aspect of Siva. At many, Goraknatha is also worshipped, like a deity. The most important characteristic of such centers is the presence of a continuous fire in a pit known as a dhuni. The tombs of their leaders, known as samadhis, are in the front of the center and also serve as a remembrance of the transitoriness of life. The Mahant is known as a Pir. Pir denotes a Muslim saint. It may have been a title adopted to prevent their annihilation by the Muslim. The most important Nathapanthis centers have been located in predominantly Muslim areas, including Kandahar in Afghanistan and Tilla in West Punjab. The temple of Goraknath at Gorakpur was destroyed by the Muslims three times.

Every twelve years at Haridwar the Nathapanthis hold an election for a central executive body called the Bhek-Baraah-Pantha, which supervises the monastic centers. Its head is known as Yogesvara. With a few

recent exceptions, inspite of the organization, the Nathapanthis have not shown appreciation for modern conditions. They have not modified their way of living, nor have they taken up educational and spiritualizing activities for their members, nor have they taken up social development activities unlike other orders, aside from offering meals to visitors who come to their centers at meal time.

4. Bairagis: devotees of Ram and Krishna etc.

We enter an entirely different world with the Vaishnava ascetics. Vaishnavas refer to Saiva ascetics as mayavadins, adherents of monistic Vedanta. Samnyasis ascetics are Saivites. Vaishnava ascetics are known as Bairagis. Bairagis wear white. Their forehead tilak or mark is a variation of three vertical lines. The material used for the tilak is never ash. Their hair may be long, matted, but they are not clean shaven. There are four main sampradayas or orders of Bairagis. They all worship very different forms or incarnations of Vishnu, and philosophically they have great differences. Three great acharyas defined their doctrinal differences. The four orders are: (1) followers of Ramnuja, the first great Vaishnava acharya who lived in Srirangam, Tirichy, Tamil Nadu. They worship Vishnu in his aspect of lying on the serpent Sesa. Today the few ascetics of this order remain in their monasteries in the south and rarely attend the Kumba Mela. But his philosophical school includes followers of Ramananda, known as Ramvats, who worship Ram and Sita, who unlike the imaginary ideal Vishnu of Ramanuja, lived as described in the Ramayana. They form the vast majority of all Bairagis ascetics at the Kumba Mela. (2) Nimbarkis ascetics, whose philosophical school combines the principles of duality and non-duality, and whose order, the oldest dates to the 12th century, and (3) ascetic followers of Vallabha acarya who are rigid monists. Both Nimbarkis and Vallabhacaris worship Krishna and Rada. Krishna's exploits are described in the Mahabharata (4) followers of the 12th century Tamil Madhva acarya, Madhavites, are dualists, but worship any form of Vishnu, as well as the five principle deities of the Hindu pantheon. and the Bhagavata Purana. The Alvars were the first Vaishnava ascetics, and they lived in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. in Tamil Nadu. The first three of the twelve Alvars, had the name muni attached to their name indicating that they were yogis who observed silence. Vaishnava ascetic orders began after Sankara acarya in the Ninth century.

The first acharya, Ramanuja lived in the 13th century. He was a disciple of Yamunacarya who in turn was the grandson of Nathamuni. The famous contemporary Yoga master and guru of BKS Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois, the late Krishnamacharya of Chennai, claims to have developed his yoga after discovering a palm leaf manuscript written by Nathamuni. Almost all Vaishnava

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Champlain's Dream

By M. G. Satchidananda

Babaji's Kriya Yoga challenges each of us to become visionaries, to find our dharma, our mission in life, to remain faithful to it. While we may begin to do so with the help of the practices taught during the first initiation seminar in particular, it is only when we begin to take concrete steps to manifest our dharma in the physical plane that we become the instrument of a higher power.

To succeed in doing so, it is instructive to examine the lives of great visionaries, who have overcome tremendous obstacles in seeking to realize their dream. I have recently finished reading "Champlain's Dream," by Pulitzer Prize winning author David Hackett Fischer, an 800 + page tome published by Simon & Schuster in 2008. It is the biography of Samuel de Champlain, the founding father of New France in North America. From 1603 to his death in 1635, he made 28 hazardous

roundtrip sea voyages across the Atlantic Ocean between France and what is today Quebec, New England and the Maritime Provinces of Canada. He did so in order to explore, map and eventually to establish self-sustaining colonies where Europeans could live in peace and harmony and prosper in the New World.

Unlike the Spanish who made slaves of or exterminated Native Americans and the British who pushed them away from their settlements, Champlain sought to unite the immigrants with them on all levels. Having lived amongst many North American tribes, he considered them to be equal in intelligence and in many ways superior to Europeans. Canada, at least, to this day is the beneficiary of his vision, not only in the relatively high status of Native Americans there, but in its official policies which are designed to promote "multiculturalism," which is akin to Yoga's ideal of "unity in diversity." Cultural and ethnic communities are encouraged to maintain their unique qualities, within a framework of respect for the human rights of all.

From his early years, Champlain was confronted with the consequences of cultural conflict. Born in 1567, during the first three decades of his life he served the King of France, Henri IV, as a soldier and mariner during three successive civil wars between Roman Catholics and Huguenot Protestants. His birthplace, Saintonge, on the west coast of France, changed hands a half dozen times between the two warring sides. Each time, residents faced the difficult choice of convert or perish after torture. Atrocities were committed on a mass scale by both sides, all in the name of religion. With great skill and patience, King Henri IV, finally brought an end to these wars with a complex agreement, the Edict of Nantes, which allowed Protestants the freedom to practice their religion in Catholic France. With the end of 30 years of war, Champlain found opportunities to explore the New World, at first aboard Spanish galleons going to Cuba and Mexico from 1599 to 1601, and subsequently what later became New England, the Maritime Provinces and Quebec.

"In his thoughts and acts we always find a consuming curiosity about the world. Here was a spirit that was sweeping the western world in the sixteenth century. Part of it was linked to the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and to a search for the spirit of God in the natural world. Another part of it flowed from the Renaissance and its hunger for knowledge.. With it came an idea of disciplined inquiry, a systematic spirit of observation, a love of study, and a deep belief that knowledge would be immediately useful and beneficial." (Fischer, page 145) With it came a passion for sharing his discoveries with

The Kumba Mela *continued*

sects were in fact philosophical -religious doctrinal expressions of the founding acharyas for the enlightenment of their lay followers. Except for the sect of Vishnuswami, they were not designed for ascetics.

The most important Vaishnava ascetic sect, with the most ascetics, is that of the Ramavats or Ramanandis. Philosophically they share the qualified dualism propounded by Ramanuja, whose Sri Sampradaya is the first and oldest Vaishnava order. Their founder, Ramananda, was born in 1300 A.D. in Prayag. His chief twelve disciples founded twelve branches, and these centers are known as Dwaras or Gadis. Some of them claim a continuous functioning for more than five centuries, in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab. One of their important centers is at Ayodhya, the traditional home of Rama and Sita. Ramananda Bairagis are in three groups: (1) Sthanadhar who remain in their monasteries (2) Khalsa, who wander and teach, and (3) Akhadamalla, the Naga, or fighting section. At the time of initiation the novitiate receives five things: name, necklace-rosary of tulasi, forehead sect mark, representative stamp (mudra) and mantra. The representative stamp or mudra resembles a bow and arrow, with two vertical white lines which join at the bridge of the nose, and a red or a white line going down the forehead to the nose bridge; or a red dot instead of the center line. The mantra is seven syllable Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. Some prefix this with Om. The garment is usually white, occasionally yellow. The greeting is Jaya Sitaram. Females can be ordained in this sect. Their names end with Dasa or in the case of women, Dasi meaning "servant of". □

(to be continued)

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News and Notes

Silence Retreat June 23-27, 2010 at the Quebec Ashram

All initiates are invited to attend. Participants who cannot remain for the entire 4 days, are welcome to attend as well for a minimum of 2 days and 2 nights at anytime from June 23rd to 27th. Group practice of postures with Durga. Inspirational talks in the evening by M Govindan. Plenty of free time to enjoy nature, to rest and rejuvenate. Participants who wish to stay longer are welcome to do so. Due to current economic conditions we are requesting a suggested contribution of only \$50 per day, with a minimum of two days required.

Pilgrimage to the Himalayas:

December 31, 2010 to January 1,

2011. Join us for an inspiring new itinerary, with daily group practice of yoga and meditation in some of the most powerful spiritual locations of S. India. We will visit ashrams and holy shrines in Chennai, Pondicherry, Tiruvannamalai, Tanjore, Palani, Pollachi, Coimbatore, Mysore and Bangalore.. All are welcome. For details visit our website.

Second level initiations will be given by M.G. Satchidananda in Zurich May 14-16, Quebec June 18-20, Estonia August 13-15, Quebec:October 15-17, and Dole, France November 5-7. Also by Nityananda in Huelva, Spain and Argentina in the spring, and by Satyananda in Germany August 13-

15, in Singapore October 15-17 and Daylesford, Australia in October 22-24.

Third level initiations will be offered near Dole, France May 17-24, in Quebec July 23 to August 1, 2010, and Estonia August August 15-22, and near Frankfurt Germany May 22-29, 2011, by M Govindan. Attain the goal of Self-realization with powerful kriyas to awaken the chakras and to go into the breathless state of samadhi.

280-Hour Teacher Trainings in Kriya Hatha Yoga will be offered by Durga and Satchidananda in Brazil, December, 2010, and again in

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Champlain's Dream *continued*

others, which he did with a series of book about his voyages, filled with beautiful maps.

During his first voyage to what is now Quebec, in 1603, at Tadoussac harbour, where the Saguenay and St Lawrence Rivers meet, Champlain arrived, by chance, during a large assembly of many tribes of Native Americans. More than 1,000 Indians in 200 large canoes had come from as far west as the Great Lakes. Champlain walked boldly into their camp with two Indian interpreters, who had visited France. The chiefs extended their hospitality, and Champlain offered his friendship, the benefits of trade, the support of the French against their mortal enemies, the Iroquois tribes to the south. An alliance was formed which lasted for many decades based upon mutual self-interest. It became essential to the growth of the colony which slowly grew in the coming years. Beginning with this initial meeting these leaders "treated each other with dignity, forbearance, and respect. They began to build an atmosphere of trust that was fundamental to relations between Europeans and Indians. They also kept it growing. When trust grew strong, many things were possible. When trust was lost, it was rarely regained. This meeting was important for that spirit, as well as for its substance. It marked the beginning of a relationship that was unique in the long history of European colonization in America. Something of its spirit has endured in Canada between European and Indians even to our own time – an extraordinary achievement.

During the next three decades Champlain mapped most of the north eastern America to the great lakes and beyond, studied its flora, fauna, the Native American culture and languages, agriculture. He wrote

books to promote the support for his efforts to colonize the New World both by merchants and the French royal court. He overcame the opposition of merchants who wanted his voyages only to return a quick profit by fur trading and fishing, and who opposed the heavy investments required for colonies to be established. He enlisted the support of Churchmen, both Catholic and Protestants from several European countries. The first European marriage in the new colony was between a Protestant Scotchman and a French Catholic, He encouraged Europeans and Native Americans to intermarry. Their descendants number in the millions today. He supported the nomadic tribes, and convinced them to supplement their hunting and gathering with seasonal agriculture. He cultivated relations and support with many influential persons in France who would invest in his colonies.

Champlain also exemplified the noble qualities of self-sacrifice, courage, patience, boundless energy, self control in the face of numerous obstacles, including long sea voyages, where he developed great expertise as a mariner, navigator and cartographer. Born as a Protestant, probably the illegitimate son of King Henri IV, he became a devout Catholic, and a humanist in the true universal sense of the word. I am deeply impressed at how Sameul de Champlain was able to establish the foundation of a New World Order based upon his humanistic values. His faith in God, his scientific mind, and his love of knowledge, his ability to draw out the best in others were the keys to his success. In an age of cynicism, self-indulgence and fear, we may all draw much inspiration from Champlain's story. He was truly the first Canadian! □



News and Notes *continued*

Frankfort, Germany August 5-15, 2011. Upon completion you will have completed the requirements to be registered by Yoga Alliance, the registry of Yoga Teachers in North America.. For schedule, course outline and more information contact Durga. durga@babajiskriyayoga.net.

Visit Durga's blog: www.seekingtheself.com.

Badrinath Ashram Construction will resume when Badrinath reopens May 19. We expect to be able to complete the ground floor this summer, and to complete the ashram by the fall of 2012. Next pilgrimage there will be September 2011.

www.babajiskriyayoga.net gets upgraded to drop down menus, and goes Arabic, Danish, Russian, and Bulgarian. During the past 4 months, David and Nicole Lavoie have been resident at the Quebec ashram. David, now "Devadas" has been able to upgrade our website with drop down menus, new formatting, and some new pages. He has done so for all of the languages. With the help of Elena Harder, Jeeva Jyoti, Moksha, and Ahmed Loutfy, who have translated our webpages, we now have our website in the following additional languages: Russian, Danish, Bulgarian and Arabic. On most recent Arabic page, any visitor can download Ahmed's excellent translation of the Eighteen Postures book into classical Arabic. Our efforts are consistent with Tirumular's saying: "All nations are my own, and all peoples are my family." And: "May the bliss I have be shared with all." Check it out!

New CD: "Om Kriya Babaji Stuti Manjari" We are pleased to announce the release of a new collection of songs sung by Bhavani Ramamoorthy, whose beautiful voice and arrangements lifts the words of many previously known and unknown Kriya Yoga mantras to sublime levels of inspiration. The

arrangements are in the traditional Karnatic form, with powerful intonations and rhythms. Some of the mantras are unique and were given us by Babaji in the book, "Voice of Babaji." Bhavani is supported by the voices of other Kriya Yoga initiates in Chennai, where it was professionally recorded and co-produced by Kriya Yoga Publications. Order your copy for US\$12.95, CA\$15.70 (inc gst) or CA\$16.87 in Quebec (inc gst & pst), \$4.00- shipping. US\$8.00-overseas airmail.

New Publications We are pleased to announce the publication of two new books: **Babaji's Kriya Yoga: Deepening Your Practice**, by Durga Ahlund and Marshall Govindan. This book provides detailed instructions, diagrams and photographs in the practice of a particular set of 18 Yoga asanas or postures, known as "Babaji's Kriya Hatha Yoga." The essays and instructions herein enable the practitioner to go beyond the development and health of the physical body, and to transform the practice of yoga asana into a spiritual practice, inducing a higher state of consciousness. Unlike earlier publications related to Hatha Yoga, this volume will show you how to transform your Hatha Yoga practice into a means for Self-Realization. It introduces students to the Five-fold Path of Babaji's Kriya Yoga. This book is dedicated to Yoga students new to Kriya Yoga and also to Initiated students looking to deepen their own practice. 150 pages. 8.5 x 11 inches format, color diagrams. Price \$17.95.

Kailash: Return to the Source and Back, by Swami Vedananda Saraswati, edited by Durga Ahlund, is a rare spiritual adventure story of one dedicated renunciant's pilgrimage on foot to Tibet's Mount Kailash. It records the remarkable meetings with a 700 year old Siddha, extraordinary ascetics, and the spiritual experiences and challenges that he faced on his journey. The author is a disciple of Shirdi Sai Baba. Numerous photographs. 130

pages. Price \$15.95.

Personal Retreats at the Quebec Ashram We are now staffed to support any initiate who would like to have a personal retreat at the Quebec ashram this winter. David and Nicole Lavoie will be your hosts. Santosh will guide you in your practice of the 18 postures and meditation. A suggested donation of C\$55 per day is requested.

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

Most back issue articles of the Kriya Yoga Journal are now being added to our website: www.babajiskriyayoga.net Go check them out.

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News and Notes *continued*

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