

GRACE & GRATITUDE –
My Experience of Babaji's Kriya Yoga Third Initiation
by Ali Gunning



This article is based on Ali's personal experience after having participated in Babaji's Kriya Yoga third initiation seminar with Yogaacharya Satyananda in Bangalore, India

The privilege of attending the third initiation of Babaji's Kriya Yoga sunk in for me, and I felt many of the group, during the second day of this nine-day intensive programme. In a beautiful ceremony we pledged our commitment to Babaji; to our sadhana and seva. The energy was rich, devotional and from then onwards I felt the constant, supportive presence of Guru.

The tradition

Babaji gifted this holistic system of yoga and personal transformation to the wider world via Yogi Ramaiah and Marshall Govindan Satchidananda. Initiations one and two are offered widely by a dedicated Order of Acharyas including our guide Satyananda, and a global family of kriyabans grows steadily.

Yet few have had the opportunity to immerse themselves in all 144 techniques of the third initiation. Let alone in a magical, sacred setting (The School of Ancient Wisdom) where Siddha Agastya once sat. For me the wait had been four or five years, the opportunity just not falling into place - or perhaps I had some lessons in patience to complete!

Kriya yoga springs from a great tradition of 'Siddhas', perfected beings who as scholars, tantric masters, poets, mystics and medics extended their influence throughout Indian and even Chinese culture. Not only do we have Babaji to contact for guidance, the third initiation offers beautiful tools to 'access' wisdom from the likes of Patanjali, Agastya and Boganathar.

The sadhana

The tradition is there, because it works. Kriya yoga is not about following a set of techniques or rituals because we are told to. Nor does it offer hierarchies, dramatic experiences or magic pills. The sadhana (dedicated practise) is the ultimate teacher and its aim is freedom - self empowerment on the journey towards Self. We take responsibility for our karma and transform it through Kriya.

This was without a doubt the most intense and beautiful retreat I have undertaken and has replenished

my reserves for many days and months to come. Satyananda shares with clarity, compassion and insight, as a clear channel for the teaching and an example of how we may act in service, rather than from the ego. The sadhana is offered across many layers so that we absorb and integrate its essence right down to the cellular level.

The intellect is awakened and inspired through lectures and philosophy, exploring that of Patanjali and the Siddhas. The mind is stilled and purified through many types of meditation and mantra diksha. Each day we create space through mindful asana practise, cleaning the 'temple', preparing the body to be a divine vessel. There is healing breathwork as well a deeper, symbolic understanding of the kundalini Kriya pranayamas - preparing the Nadis and purifying the subtle body. And we open our hearts through Puja, Yagna (fire ceremony) and direct connection with Babaji.

In addition to expanding the Chakra work begun in the second initiation - balancing the energy centres through meditation, bija mantra and movement - we explore the Dwaras (the 9 body openings). Purification leads to greater sensitivity of the subtle body and a deeper understanding of pratyahara (the fifth yogic limb, withdrawal of the senses).

Alongside the practical elements of the retreat are opportunities to self reflect through conscious journaling. As Yogi Ramaiah insisted 'practise, practise, practise - record, record, record'!

Waves of tiredness, bliss, playfulness passed through the group as we processed samskaras (subconscious patterns) through intensive tapas and the interactions of living in a yogic community. Tapas is the fire of purification and we cannot hope to transcend to the realms of the siddhas without first preparing the ground of our minds and bodies, bringing them into sattva guna (the state of lightness and balance). We are tested in personal and shared ways - the early starts, the pain of sitting, periods of mauna (silence).

Kriya is not just the practise itself but its intention and observation. Not just taking a vow of mauna because that's part of the retreat but studying, feeling the effect of entering and leaving the silence, using it to draw towards an inner silence.

Yoga - union

Babaji's Kriya yoga offers a unique combination of inner alchemy and action with awareness - which from the second initiation onwards becomes constant sadhana in daily life. Rotating the third initiation Kriyas offers us a vast toolkit for transformation. Approaching our growth essentially from both the 'bottom up' and 'top down' means that our realisations are embodied and grounded in the world. While awakened energies are held in a space of humility and witnessing that opens us to receiving grace. The perfect union of Shiva and Shakti.

With the support of Guru, we begin to see the divine in everything; the whisper of the breeze through the tropical plants, the shining eyes of our fellow sadhaks and ultimately within ourselves. The silence in the hall becomes deeper each day, our meditations longer, without forcing, as we move towards the final days of the Samadhi Kriyas. At times I felt as if being fed through Babaji's ego shredder machine, at others that I was floating freely in layers of silence.

Integration into life

My sadhana of late had become more about 'just sitting' and I was a little nervous (and resistant) about getting back into a structured programme. But these nine days reminded me the importance of taking regular time out for intensive practise, silence, sangha (spiritual community). As Satya reminds us 'we train our weapons in peace time' - we move deeper and that depth sustains us through the ups and downs of life and the times when our ability to practise is challenged.

The third initiation invites you to deepen your sadhana, your devotion, your ability to create and your sense of surrender. The unfolding continues as we take the energy of this experience out into our world with renewed awareness. I remain eternally grateful for this opportunity to receive, share, grow.

Om Kriya Babaji Nama Aum!

Ali Gunning

move/ breathe/ sound/ be

Ali Gunning (Piriamvada) teaches Akhanda and Kundalini Yoga and Gong Meditation in East London and travels regularly to India for inspiration. She has completed Level I, II and III of Babaji's Kriya Yoga Initiations in India with Yogaacharya Satyananda. You can find her schedule and follow her blogs about yoga and life at resonantbeing.net, yoga-adrift.com, @yogagongwithali