

Autobiography of a yogi: A revival story of the Kriya Yoga technique in modern India

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Abstract:

“Autobiography of a yogi “written by Paramahansa Yogananda is a bible of revival of yogic science in modern India. It talks about the kriya yoga, (a yogic process in which a human can accelerate his/her human potential to the highest level) that was lost in the dark age. The Mahavatar Babaji also known as kriya Babaji revives this lost technique through his disciple Lahiri Mahasaya. Mahavatar Babaji is the deathless guru who lives in the cave of Himalaya for thousands of years with his young stalwart body, that never grows old and without the effect of aging process. Lahiri Mahasaya, the direct disciple of Babaji was born in west Bengal on 30th sept 1828 during the time of British rule. He was an accountant in the Military Engineering Department of the govt. once he was transferred to Ranikhet and met Babaji in the cave of Ranikhet and Babaji initiated him into the kriya yoga.

Kriya yoga has been transferred like a lineage from Mahavatar Babaji to Lahiri Mahasaya, Lahiri Mahasaya to Yukteswar Giri, Yukteswar Giri to Paramahansa Yogananda. Many people are practicing Kriya Yoga but these are the name of the people who fixed the root of Kriya Yoga. Later Yogananda was sent to America as the spiritual delegator of India. In America he spreads the knowledge of Kriya Yoga and initiates many people into this ancient Yogic technique of Kriya Yoga. In America Paramahansa Yogananda, the prema avatar according to his revered guru Yukteswar, made so many disciples and inspired so many great personalities at that time, the great horticulturist Luther Burbank, the author of the “The Training of the Human Plant “is one of them. Luther Burbank is a good friend and also a disciple of Yogananda, later he was initiated into Kriya Yoga by Yogananda.

Keywords: Kriya Yoga, Babaji, Spirituality, Samadhi, Meditation, Cosmic Energy

Introduction:

According to the book “Autobiography of a yogi “the Kriya Yoga technique was first

initiated by lord Krishna to the great warrior of Mahabharata Arjuna. when Arjuna saw the blood relative in front of him in the Mahabharata war, he was devastated from inside and couldn't hold the bow to fight because all the enemy were his own brothers, guru, and grandfather. He saw his guru Drona who taught him how to hold the bow and how to hit the target, now he is in front of him as a fierce enemy and if the war has to win, he will have to kill his own guru. Then he saw the great warrior Pitama Bhishma, the grandfather of Pandavas and Kauravas and also the rightful heir of the throne (taken oath for not taking the throne for the pleasure of his father, for this great sacrifice his father adorned him with the boon of self-Willed Death) who always love Pandavas and Kauravas equally but supported Pandavas from internally as they were in righteousness. Then he saw Kripacharya and all his blood relatives and devastated from inside as he has to kill all the relative to win the war. Seeing the nervousness of Arjuna Lord Krishna gave the knowledge of Karma Yoga/ Kriya Yoga to Arjuna and told him that it is your own duty to fight the war, because the most important duty of a warrior is to fight the war without thinking about the outcome of the war. Lord Krishna also told him that nobody is brother or relative in the war, if you will have to establish righteousness then you have to win the war in any cost. This was the same Kriya Yoga that Krishna gave to Arjun, and Arjun gave to Panini and Panini gave this Yogic technique to Mahavatar Babaji. From that time this Yogic technique was lost in the dark age and it was revived by Kriya Yoga Babaji through his disciple Lahiri Mahasaya.

Paramahansa Yogananda, the chosen man by the revered Babaji, later spread the knowledge of Kriya Yoga in the west. from the story of the book 'Autobiography of Yogi' 'one can clearly predict that everything is pre decided by God, just like Lahiri Mahasaya was transferred to Ranikhet and there he was initiated into Kriya Yoga by the immortal Babaji. The parent of Yogananda were the disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, from the birth of Yogananda, he was surrounded by the disciple of Lahiri Mahashaya. When Yogananda became a high school student, he was inadvertently attracted toward the Yoga and meditation. He had an incessant desire to become a Yogi, and this Yogic mentality reflects during his school time. Consequently, he convinced his two friends Amar Mitter and Jotin Ghosh to go to the Himalaya, the spiritual hub for the great ancient Yogi who possess immense spiritual and miraculous power, and to meet the Himalayan Yogi. The three friends Yogananda, (also known as Mukunda in his childhood) Amar and Jotin leave for Himalaya without informing their parents. But their quest was not a successful one, they had been kept by their family members on the way. Ananta, the brother of Yogananda convinced him to not to leave home. But he was destined to become a Yogi, how can anyone change the decision of the almighty. As a consequence of this he was invariably searching for a Guru to energize himself with cosmic energy, he had an incessant desire to understand God and his creation. From his childhood he had been listening about the miraculous story of the great Yogi, so he had a

hope to find such a great Yogi in his life as his Guru. That is why he was leaving his house again and again to find a Master in his life like a thirsty man finding water on the desert relentlessly. Finally, the day came when Yogananda met his guru Yukteswar Giri and he was initiated into Kriya Yoga by the grace of the great Yogi. Everything was happening according to the plan of Babaji, it is Babaji who sends Yogananda to Yukteswar Giri and it is Babaji who sends Yogananda to America. As Yogananda had heard many stories about Babaji but he hadn't seen the revered Babaji yet. Hence, when the time came to leave for America Yogananda relentlessly pray to Babaji for his guidance and valuable lesson and at last after a long prayer Babaji appears before him and gives him lesson about the purpose of his life and Babaji also reveals the truth that you have been chosen by the God to visit America to spread the knowledge of Kriya Yoga. At first Yogananda had many doubts over his own knowledge and ability, he thought that how can I represent India in a great country like America as he was not so fluent in English. But all his doubts vanished from his mind after seeing the great spiritual enlightened Babaji in front of him, he became unnaturally very confident and courageous to spread the message of God in America. He also became very happy that he has been chosen by the great yogi in this world Mahavatar Babaji.

From Babaji to Lahiri Mahasaya, Lahiri Mahasaya to Sri Yukteswar Giri and Yukteswar to Paramahansa Yogananda, it spreads every corner of the world and teaches humanity how to leave a peaceful, beautiful and meaningful life. There were other great disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya like Swami Kealananda, the Sanskrit teacher of Yogananda; Shridi Sai Baba; Panchanan Battacharya; Brahmachari Keshabananda; Swami Pranabananda, a saint with two bodies; Ramgopal Majumdar, the sleepless saint; Bhupendranath Sanyal. All these disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya were spiritually very awake and they were very influential people of society, some of them were great master who could perform miracle like their guru Lahiri Mahasaya. There were many great disciples of Yukteswar Giri as well like Sailendra Bejoy Das Gupta, Swami Narayan Giri, Motilal Thakur, Swami Satyanananda Giri, Swami Bhabananda Giri, Swami Hariharananda Gir etc. The most prominent and favorite disciple of Yukteswar Giri is Paramahansa Yogananda, who spreads the teachings and messages of the great guru all across the world. The other disciples of Yukteswar Giri were also spiritually as awaken as the disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya. The disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda are Roy Eugene Davis, Goswami Kiyanda, Swami Kriyananda, Daya Mata SRF, Rajarshi Janakananda etc. All these disciples were the great Kriya Yoga practitioner whose contribution in society was to spread the message of Kriya Yoga to each and every individual who wish to initiate into the Kriya Yoga process.

Literature Review

Many journals have been published on the novel “Autobiography of a yogi” and many authors have written many things on it. Recently, I read a journal “A literary critique on Autobiography of a yogi” written by Tushar J. Trivedi under the journal Vidhyayana, an international multidisciplinary Peer-Review E-journal, in this journal Tushar J. Trivedi discussed about how paramahansa Yogananda influenced the people of America by teaching them the importance of Yoga and Vedanta philosophy. He also discussed about the historical context, Yogananda life and teaching, the origins of Yoga and Vedanta, the concept of karma and reincarnation etc.

Another journal I read on it is “Exploring the spiritual Dimensions of Yoga: insight from Paramahansa Yogananda’s “Autobiography of a Yogi” written by Anchal Sharma published under “journal of Yoga and physiotherapy” in 2024. In this journal the author Anchal Sharma discussed about the science of Kriya Yoga and he also discussed about the science of breathing technique and the pranayama.

Many authors have different approach on this novel but my approach on this novel is different, as the title mentioned above here, I am going to discuss about the revival story of Kriya Yoga technique. That will help millions of people around the world to get an idea about the teaching of Kriya Yoga. Here, I have also discussed about many Yogis who influenced the life of millions of people.

Kriya Yoga: A Miracle

In this scientific world, it is very difficult for a person to make something belief that miracle is really exist. Miracle is sometime related to the superstition of the society. When someone talk about miracle society always blame him/her as unscientific and impractical, however we must admit that there is a natural force that is omnipresent and that support the human who pursue good deed. In every religion there is a miraculous stories related to gods and the great saints. Every religion has different mythology just like Ramayana and Mahabharata are the two world famous mythologies of Hindu religion, Bible is the mythology of Christianity, there is also Greek mythology. In every mythology we can find some miracle, hence we cannot avoid miracle whether it is accepted by the scientific society or not. The human society, the world and the whole universe itself is a miracle, we don’t have any idea about how the world was formed, we don’t have any idea about how the life came to this earth so on and so forth. Though we have sent human to the moon, though we have many scientific theories but we are unable to solve our own mysteries. Miracle is not something that can be proved by someone it’s an experience, only who can understand it whoever has experienced it in his own life.

In this book 'Autobiography of a yogi' the writer Paramahansa Yogananda describes about the many miraculous stories about the life of Lahiri Mahasaya, Yukteswar Giri and many great saints. He has also described about the miraculous stories of his own life. As a favorite student of Yukteswar Giri, Yogananda was too close to his Guru and his Guru used to tell him about Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and about his own life stories.

The first miracle that the writer witness in his life was when Yogananda was merely eight years old. He was affected by Asiatic cholera and unable to move his body, the doctors were hopeless and left the hope of his survival. Then Yogananda's mother suggested Yogananda to bow before the photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya, as the suggestion of his mother Yogananda bow and prayed before the photograph and suddenly he saw a blinding light coming from the photograph and started healing his body. Subsequently, his body was completely healed and he felt relaxed, cured, energetic and healthy. Lahiri Mahasaya was a great Kriya Yogi and a great master of Kriya Yoga. Therefore, he had healing power. Once, a blind man came to Lahiri Mahasaya and told him that revered Guruji please bless me with vision so that I can see the world. First, Lahiri Mahasaya refused to do so but after seeing the belief of that blind man, Guruji told him to reiterate 'Rama name' while doing meditation and told him to continue this kriya for some days. The blind man continued to do this process for some days and as the days passed by, he was bit by bit getting cure from his blindness and one day he was completely cured from his blindness and he could completely see the world with his glittering eyes. This was one of the greatest Miracle in the life of Lahiri Mahasaya.

Once a photographer came to Lahiri Mahasaya and tried to click the photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya but when he clicked the photo, the image of the Lahiri Mahasaya didn't appear in the camera. After trying many times when the photographer failed to do so, he humbly fell on the feet of Lahiri Mahasaya and requested him to allow him to take only one photo of him. Seeing the request of the photographer Lahiri Mahasaya allowed him to take his photograph and thanks to the photographer who put his effort to click only one photo of Lahiri Mahasaya, this is the only photo of Lahiri Mahasaya present in our time.

There are many stories like this of Lahiri Mahasaya, Yukteswar Giri and other great saints performing miracle through the help of Kriya Yoga technique, they also possessed healing power. They could able to heal many diseases and also able to bless someone with extra life. Once a student of Lahiri Mahasaya was completely dead due to illness and through the request of Yukteswar Giri, Lahiri Mahasaya revived his life from his death through his Yogic cosmic energy. Lahiri Mahasaya was able to present at many places at the same time

and this power was not only limited with Lahiri Mahasaya but also present with many of his disciples like Yukteswar Giri, Swami pranabananda so on and so forth. They could do space travel as well. Once, when Lahiri Mahasaya was an accountant in the govt railway Engineering department under British rule, one of his senior Officer was upset due to his wife's illness. When Lahiri Mahasaya knew about it, he sat in a meditative posture and woke up from his meditation after some time and told his senior officer that your wife is now out of danger. He told to the senior Officer that I had gone to England to protect your wife and your wife is now writing a letter for you and she is writing this and this for you (some words from the letter have been mentioned in the book), the officer couldn't believe the word of the Lahiri Mahasaya. Eventually, the letter arrived and the Officer amazed to see the letter, because whatever had been told by Lahiri Mahasaya earlier was written on the letter. And after having been cured from her illness the wife of the senior Officer arrived to India and when she saw Lahiri Mahasaya, she claimed that a structured like Lahiri Mahasaya appeared before me and protected me, when I was badly ill and about to die. The senior Officer also told her about the letter and both of them sure that it is Lahiri Mahasaya who protected her from her illness.

The great Kriya yogi like Lahiri Mahasaya, Yukteswar Giri, Pranabananda and Keshabananda had the power to see the future. Yukteswar Giri had already predicted that one day Yogananda will go to USA to spread the knowledge of Kriya Yoga. Lahiri Mahasaya had predicted that after 50 years a disciple of his own disciple will write the biography of him. Those who are the true practitioners of Kriya Yoga, they can willingly transform their life energy from one body to another body. After their death, they can appear before anyone according to their choice, like Lahiri Mahasaya appeared before many of his favorite disciples with his body and flesh after his death. After the death of Yukteswar Giri also he appeared before many of his disciples and his aura can be felt in his Ashram. If we talk about Paramahansa Yogananda, when he died his body had been kept open for the several of his disciples across the world for view for 20 days, and his body was not decomposed in that 20 days periods. Normally, a human body started decompose after one to two days of his/her death but in the case of Paramahansa Yogananda was different, his body was filled with such cosmic energy that after 20 days also it looked fresh. These are only the few miracles of Kriya Yoga that I have tried to explain here, the real Kriya yogi can do many things that we cannot imagine in our scientific world.

Conclusion

Talking about Kriya Yoga is like talking about the depth of the ocean. Human knowledge and potential are very limited to understand the depth and the mystery of the Kriya Yoga, even the great Kriya Yogi unable to find the depth knowledge and immense

benefits of Kriya Yoga. Kriya Yoga is an umbrella term, many Yoga and pranayama come under it.

Here, I have tried to discuss about some of the miracles and benefits of Kriya Yoga with my limited knowledge that I have possessed through the book ‘Autobiography of a Yogi’. Kriya yoga is an advance version of scientific yogic technique in which, we can accelerate our spiritual journey to the next level. It is a fastest way to get self-realization. Hence, it has been used as a tool to get the ultimate spirituality by the great Yogi of the ancient time. In this modern age also people across the world are practicing this Yogic technique and extracting immense benefit from it.

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