

Sustainable Yogic Agriculture (Shashwat Yogik Agriculture)ⁱ Tamasin Ramsay, PhDⁱⁱ

The idea that thoughts can affect matter is not a new one. Indeed, indigenous cultures have long accepted the interconnectedness between human thought and the natural world which scientific research continues to affirm. It is worth considering this relationship as we look for solutions to our global food crisis.

Since the 1960s there has been systematic research into the effect of thoughts on flora. In 1963 Grad determined that plants are receptive to energy; healing energy improved growth, and negative energy stunted it. Backster (1968, 2003) pioneered studies clearly demonstrating that plants and other living organisms respond to human intention. Emoto's popular research photographing water crystals (2004) confirmed that thoughts, words and intentions affect matter. A study by theology student Du Charme (2007) revealed that positive and negative intentions have a statistically significant effect on seed germination. Yiji (1991), and Roney-Dougal and Solfvin (2003) have also conducted healing energy studies on seeds, with positive results.

A growing environmental movement, combined with the global problem of hunger and poverty has pushed researchers into exploring new innovations based on ecologically sound, socially viable and sustainable systems of agriculture. The Rural Wing of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Universityⁱⁱⁱ (BKWSU)^{iv}, with the majority of its members living in agricultural villages, has also been looking for ways to improve the livelihoods, and lives, of farmers.

Sustainable Yogic Agriculture (SYA) is an initiative started by approximately 400 farmers from central and northern India. The farmers wish to address the damage that climate change and human activity has been visiting on the health and well being of their families and communities. SYA combines systematic thought-based meditation practices at all stages of the crop cycle, with methods of traditional organic farming. Scientific teams from some of India's top agricultural universities (G.B. Pant University of Agriculture, Science and Technology and S.D. Agricultural University) are now working closely with SYA farming communities to great mutual benefit. While the farmers are experiencing the social benefits of a regular meditation practice, the scientific data are also significant.

Below are data gathered from a soybean crop on 1.5 acres of land in Shri Shivaji Agriculture College in Maharashtra. The benefits of yogic agriculture are clear.

Parameters	Units	Results	
		<i>Yogic</i>	<i>Inorganic</i>
Protein(total)	%	35.00	18.72
Carbohydrates(starch)	%	4.36	10.47
Energy value	Kcal/100gm	157	116

Further agricultural studies have been conducted in Kolhapur, Maharashtra in the villages of Majle, Chipari, Rangli, Dakawade Kotepira Kathepishan Ambap Ichalkanji, Bhambre, Sangrul and Hanmant Vadi.

SYA Farmers outside of India are employing similar techniques. A farmer in the Umbrian region of Italy is cultivating land that has grown 'conventional' (non-organic) corn, hay and wheat for more than 40 years. Two years ago he ploughed the land to a depth of only 10-15 cm rather than the previous 40-50 cm, and planted non-modified blond millet seeds rather than the widely available genetically modified seeds. After two years of SYA, a variety of black millet seeds surfaced in abundance along with the blond millet that was sown. This black millet is an ancient seed that has not been seen in generations. The farmer

reports it to be highly nutritious and resilient. This is the beauty and importance of returning to biodiversity in agriculture.

Local and indigenous communities are being called upon to return to traditional forms of agriculture, whilst adapting these methods to their natural environment and social circumstances. Environmental collapse will not be halted, and biodiversity will not be protected unless we address the deeper problems of humanity that rest at the level of attitude and associated behaviour. The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University affirm the view of many environmental philosophers, ethicists and religious leaders: that to bring about change in any social or environmental system, requires a spiritual foundation grounded in self-reflection, universal values, and self-change. Sustainable Yogic Agriculture supports a move towards personal responsibility, positive action and integrated spirituality in a way that directly responds to an urgent global need.

Whether one is an environmentalist, a spiritual practitioner or a scientist, the laws that govern nature are irrefutable. Give and more will be given to you. Take and the little you have will be gone. As a human collective, we have used nature as a commodity, and a resource for our own gain, without considering the consequences. Now, it is time to give back to nature, allowing her to replenish, so we may once again live in a sustainable, bio-diverse and happy world.

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ⁱ The data within this paper are published with kind permission of the Sustainable Yogic Agriculture scientific team in India. For further information about this project, please contact Dr Sunita Pandey (G.B. Pant University of Agriculture) at: sunitatewari_8@yahoo.co.in.

ⁱⁱ Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Psychology, Monash University, Australia. NGO Representative to the United Nations, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, New York.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in consultative status with UNICEF and affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI). It is also an accredited observer organization to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

^{iv} Translated from the original Hindi 'Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya'. The BKWSU is not a higher education institution, but a spiritual learning organization.