

*An Introduction to*

***KUNDALINI***

***YOGA***

*As taught by Yogi Bhajan*

*The Yoga of Awareness*

# ***Science of Kundalini Yoga***

## **KUNDALINI YOGA**

Kundalini Yoga is a potent and effective system of self-transformational and personal development. Kundalini Yoga stimulates individual growth through systemic techniques, which strengthen the nervous system, balance the glandular system, and align the chakras, for increased stability and vitality. Kundalini Yoga encompasses and draws from all yogic systems and techniques. Meditation improves mental concentration, sharpens awareness, develops intuition and gives direct experience of consciousness. Kundalini yoga classes take the students through exercise sets which incorporate breathing and work on all systems of the body, followed by meditation and deep relaxation.

Kundalini Yoga is designed for the active person with responsibilities in school, work, family and the world. It was maintained as a secret oral tradition for thousands of years which protected the techniques from abuse, but also created an unnecessary image of mystery.

Kundalini Yoga can be practiced by anyone if it is done gradually and according to the instructions.

As our society becomes increasingly technological, our world becomes more intimately connected and influenced by its numerous cultures. The pace of change is on the rise and the stress on our body's nervous system is increasing. The science of Kundalini Yoga allows us to tap into a technology that helps us cope with this escalating change. The inner science of the mind is the tool that will enable us to cope with the pressure of these changes. It is the mind that interprets our outer and inner worlds and it is the mind that we must train to guide us through the flow of change.

As a beginning student you should go at a pace that suits your flexibility and endurance. As you feel more comfortable with the exercises taught in class, begin to practice at home.

Kundalini Yoga is said to be the most powerful of the twenty-two schools of yoga, all of which are beneficial. The Yoga Sutras (writings) say that what you can achieve in 12 years of Hatha Yoga, plus 6 years of Raj Yoga, plus 3 years of Mantra Yoga, plus 1 year of Laya Yoga can be accomplished in a single year of perfectly practiced Kundalini Yoga.

## ***Class Structure***

Opening (tune-in) Mantra: **Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō**

**Ong** Infinite creative  
**Namō** I call on that  
**Guru** Transforming Wisdom  
**Dev** Subtle Energy  
**Namō** I call on that energy

Theme Topic  
Warm-Up Exercises  
Main Kriya  
Meditation  
Deep Relaxation  
Closing

### ***Classes include—***

Pranayama - Breathing Techniques

Asanas - Body Postures

Mudras - Hand Positions

Mantras - Sound Currents

Bhandas - Body Locks

## ***The Science of Breathing***

### **PRANAYAMA**

The yogic science of breath is called Pranayama. Pranayama is the control (yama) of the life energy (prana) through breathing exercises. Kundalini Yoga employs a wide range of breathing techniques. The breath, its rhythm, and its depth relate to different states of health, consciousness, and emotion. Kundalini Yoga uses the breath scientifically to change energy states. There are a few basic breaths that should be mastered in order to freely practice the kriyas.

### **Long Deep Breathing**

The simplest of all yogic breaths is long deep breathing. It is a habit that we in our western culture have lost. Our normal tendency is to breathe shallow and irregularly. This leads to an emotional approach to life, chronic tension, and weak nerves. The lungs are the largest organ of the human body. Average lungs can enlarge to a volume of almost 6,000 cubic centimeters. Normally we use only 600 – 700 cubic centimeters of that capacity. If you do not expand the lungs to their full capacity, the small air sacks in the lungs, called alveoli, cannot clean their mucous lining properly. Therefore you do not get enough oxygen so toxic irritants that lead to infections and disease build up. By taking a deep breath you can expand the lungs by about eight times. If you establish a habit of breathing long, deep and slowly, you will build your endurance and patience. A long deep breath can bring you back to your center, even in chaotic circumstances.

**Posture** - Sit in a comfortable meditative posture, i.e., easy pose, with a straight spine.

**Nose** - The normal breath should always be through the nose. Breathing through the nose filters the air, warms it, and humidifies it, so that the air does not disturb the sensitive ecology of the lungs. Most importantly for the yogi, the nostrils are connected to the Ida (left nostril – feminine energy) and Pingala (right nostril - masculine energy) and therefore Prana is taken into the body through the nose.

**Inhale** - Begin by pushing the navel point outward and then filling the lungs with prana from the abdomen upward.

**Exhale** - To exhale completely, breath out as much “left over” air as possible.

## ***The Science of Breathing (continued)***

### **Breath of Fire**

Breath of Fire is a rapid, rhythmic, bellows type of breathing method. This breath is used consistently throughout Kundalini Yoga Kriyas. In Breath of Fire, the focus of energy is at the navel point. The breath is fairly rapid, 2 to 3 breaths per second, continuous and powerful with no pause between the inhale and exhale.

**Posture** - Sit in a comfortable meditative posture, i.e., easy pose, with a straight spine.

**Exhale** - As you exhale, the air is pushed out by pulling in the navel point and abdomen towards the spine. In this motion, the chest area is moderately relaxed.

**Inhale** - As you inhale, the air is pulled in by pushing the navel point forward to bring the air into the lungs. This is a very balanced breath with no emphasis on either the exhale or inhale, and with equal power given to both. Breath of Fire is a cleansing breath which cleans the blood and releases old toxins from the lungs, mucous lining, blood vessels, and cells. Regular practice expands the lungs quickly. You can start with three minutes of Breath of Fire and build to twenty.

**Note:**

*While pregnant or menstruating, substitute Long Deep Breathing for Breath of Fire.*

### **Sitali Pranayama**

Sitali Pranayama is a well known practice that soothes and cools the spine in the area of the fourth and sixth vertebrae. This in turn regulates the sexual and digestive energy. This breath is often used to regulate fevers and blood pressure and to cure digestive ailments.

**Posture** - Sit in a comfortable meditative posture, i.e., easy pose, with a straight spine.

**Inhale** - Curl the tongue and protrude it slightly past the lips. Inhale deeply and smoothly through the tongue and mouth.

**Exhale** - Exhale through the nose.

## ***The Science of Body Postures***

### **ASANA**

All forms of yoga use Asana as a part of their practice, even if the Asana is as simple as sitting in a comfortable meditative posture. One of the main reasons why Kundalini Yoga works so fast and effectively is its use of angles in its Asanas; this is one of the “secrets” of its success.

Lifting the legs to different heights creates pressure on specific glands and organs depending upon the angle of the lift. Pressuring the glands causes them to secrete. When the pressure is released and the body is held motionless, the glandular secretions that have been stimulated have an opportunity to circulate freely throughout the body. The result is a balanced glandular system which has a definite effect on your emotional stability through the chemistry of your body.

The key idea within an Asana is that all parts of the body are well-balanced, comfortable and aligned. In certain deep meditations your consciousness may alter to the degree that you temporarily lose normal body awareness. In that case, the posture must be balanced in such a way that it is easy for the body to hold the Asana without conscious effort. If you are imbalanced then your muscles may jerk or spasm to adjust for the imbalance. That little spasm can cause a negative response in the body so make sure that you are well-balanced and comfortable in the Asana, if not, ask your instructor for assistance.

### **Some Guidelines for Asana**

1. Sit on a surface that's not too cold or too hard.
2. Use a sheepskin or a mat for support. A sheepskin or other natural fiber such as wool, cotton or silk provides an electro-magnetic insulation from the ground.
3. Wear comfortable clothes made of natural fibers such as sweats. If you must eat before class only eat something light like a piece of fruit and avoid eating anything heavy two hours before class.
4. Take your socks off. Our feet have approximately 72,000 nerve endings in them. When we allow our feet to breath we allow our nervous system the chance to connect with the energy surrounding us.
5. *While pregnant or menstruating ask your instructor for a variation when the asana stimulates the navel center or calls for an inverted pose.*

## ***The Science of the Hands***

### **MUDRA**

The hand is magical as well as functional. Early in life we use our hands in our first exploration of the world as we learn to manipulate it and create in it. The yogis mapped out the hand areas and their associated parts of the body. Each area of the hand reflexes to a certain area of the body or brain. Each area also represents different emotions or behaviors. By curling, crossing, stretching and touching fingers to other fingers and areas we can effectively talk to the body and mind. The hands become a keyboard for input to our mind/body computer. Each of the six Mudras listed below is an example of this technique of giving clear messages to the mind/body energy system.

#### **Gyan Mudra**

**Mudra:** Place the tip of the thumb together with the tip of the index finger.

**Stimulates:** Knowledge and ability.

**Planet:** Jupiter – representing expansion.

#### **Shuni Mudra**

**Mudra:** Place the tip of the middle finger on the tip of the thumb.

**Stimulates:** Patience and discernment.

**Planet:** Saturn – the task master, the law of karma, the taking of responsibility and courage to hold to duty.

#### **Surya or Ravi Mudra**

**Mudra:** Place the tip of the ring finger on the tip of the thumb.

**Stimulates:** Revitalizing energy, nervous system strength and good health.

**Planet:** Sun – energy, health and sexuality. Uranus – nervous system strength, intuition and change.

#### **Buddhi Mudra**

**Mudra:** Place the tip of the little finger on the tip of the thumb.

**Stimulates:** Capacity to communicate clearly and intuitively and psychic development.

**Planet:** Mercury – quickness and mental powers of communication.

#### **Venus Lock**

**Mudra:** Place the palms facing each other. Interlace the fingers with the left little finger on the bottom. Lightly press the left thumb tip on the webbing between the thumb and index finger of the right hand. Lightly press the tip of the right thumb into the fleshy mound at the base of the left hand. Thumb positions are reversed for women.

**Stimulates:** The Mudra channels the sexual energy and promotes glandular balance. It also brings the ability to focus or concentrate easily if you rest the Mudra in your lap while in a meditative posture.

**Planet:** Venus – energy of sensuality and sexuality.

## ***The Science of Vibration***

### **MANTRA**

Mantra is the scientific use of sound to affect the consciousness. Next to breathing (necessary for any endeavor), the use of Mantra is the most important aspect of the practice of Kundalini Yoga. 'MAN' means mind. 'TRA' means to tune the vibration (just as one tunes the strings of a guitar). Mantra is a sound current which tunes and controls mental vibration. It is the "directive psyche," a word or words, combinations or syllables, which help focus the mind. Such words have enormous power. Below are three "main" mantras which are used in a Kundalini Yoga class.

### **SAT NAM – Bij Mantra**

**SAT:** Truth **NAM:** Name (Identity) "Truth is your identity; God's Name is Truth."

SAT NAM (rhymes with "but mom") is the seed, Bij Mantra. It reinforces the divine consciousness in everyone. Use it as a greeting, anytime, anywhere, anyplace. This mantra is also used while breathing, inhaling SAT, exhaling NAM, as a prayer to give thanks for food you're about to eat, and at times, to close a teaching session.

### **ONG NAMO GURU DEV NAMO – Adi Mantra**

This mantra calls upon the Creator, the Divine Teacher inside every human being. It establishes a strong and clear connection so that we can receive the highest guidance, energy and inspiration. Always chant it at least three times before beginning any session of Kundalini Yoga; this is a very important mantra!

More important than this mantra's literal meaning, is the resonant activity it creates within the human body. There are three main chambers: the head, the chest and the abdomen. Within these three chambers are the glands and organs that govern bodily functions and set the blood chemistry which in turn controls mood. These words when chanted correctly, resonate in the three chambers and awaken them to the effects of the yoga about to be done in class.

The palms of the hands are flat together (Prayer Pose/Mudra). The positive side of the body (right or male) and negative (left or female) are neutralized. The Mudra is then placed in the center of the chest (the Sternum) at the 4th Chakra, the Heart Center. Your neutrality is at the center of your Chakra/Energy centers. The eyes are closed and focused on the 6th Chakra, the Third Eye: the space in between the eyebrows and about 1/2 inch up.

**ONG:** is nasal, vibrating the upper palate of the mouth and in turn the hypothalamus gland, pituitary gland, nasal passages and the entire head chamber.

*Its meaning:* the Creator.

**NAMO:** is abdominal. Its two consonants 'N' and 'M' close off the front of the mouth and force the cylinder of vibrating air down the esophagus into the abdomen. We open the abdominal chamber with this resonance.

*Its meaning:* reverent greetings, salutations.

**GURU:** is straight from the heart or chest chamber. Both 'Gu' and 'Ru' are sounds which shoot out like a cannon from the chest and lungs.

*Its meaning:* the giver of the technology (GU: darkness, RU: light). For this reason, spiritual teachers were often called Gurus as they brought the light of wisdom to the darkness.

**DEV:** resonates through the throat and into the nasal passages. By this it connects the throat center with its *power of understanding* to the vast knowledge of the third eye (pituitary gland region. *Understanding plus knowledge equals wisdom.* As in this formula “DEV” means God-like.

*Its meaning:* transparent (non-physical)

### **THE SUNSHINE SONG – Closing Mantra**

Throughout the world, Kundalini Yoga classes, as taught by Yogi Bhajan, Master of Kundalini Yoga, use this “Sunshine Song” to close each class. It is a positive affirmation bringing blessings to all.

**May the long time sun shine upon you  
All love surround you  
And the pure light within you  
Guide your way on  
May the long time sun shine upon you  
All love surround you  
And the pure light within you  
Guide your way on  
Guide your way on  
Guide your way on  
Sat Nam**

## ***The Science of Muscle Contraction***

### **BHANDA**

There are certain combinations of muscle contractions that are called Bhandas or Locks. Each Lock has a function of changing blood circulation, nerve pressure and the flow of cerebral spinal fluid. They also direct the flow of psychic energy and prana into the main energy channels that relate to raising Kundalini energy. The Bhandas also concentrate the body's energy for use in consciousness and self-healing.

#### **Jalandhara Bhanda**

The most basic Bhandas is Jalandhara Bhandas, the **Neck Lock**. This Lock is practiced by contracting back of the neck and throat. The chin rests in or near the notch between the collar bones at the top of the breast bone. The head stays level without tilting forward. The spine in the neck straightens to allow the increased flow of pranic energy to travel freely into the upper glandular centers of the brain. This is critical. In the Kundalini Yoga Kriyas, a vast energy is generated that produces psychic heat which opens the pranic Nadis (channels) that may be blocked. When this blocking happens, there can sometimes be a quick shift in blood pressure causing dizziness. Usually used in all meditative, easy pose (cross legged) Asanas.

#### **Uddiyana Bhandas**

This is the **Diaphragm Lock**. It is applied by lifting the diaphragm up high into the thorax and pulling the upper abdominal muscles back toward the spine. This creates a cavity that gives a gentle massage to the heart muscles. It is considered to be a powerful lock since it allows the pranic force to transform through the central nerve channel of the spine up into the neck region.

It stimulates the sense of compassion and can give a new youthfulness to the entire body. The spine should be straight. It is normally applied on the exhale.

#### **Mul Bhandas**

The **Root Lock** is the most complex of the Bhandas and it is frequently applied. It coordinates and combines the energy of the rectum, sex organs and navel point. The first part of the Mul Bhandas is to contract the anal-sphincter and draw it in and up as if trying to hold back a bowel movement. Then draw up on the sex organs as if trying to hold back from urinating. Lastly, pull in the navel point by drawing back the lower abdomen towards the spine so the rectum and sex organs are drawn up toward the navel point. This action unites the two major energy flows of the body: Prana and Apana. Prana is the generative energy of the 4th and 5th Chakra. Apana is the eliminating energy of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Chakras. The Root Lock pulls the Apana up and the Prana down to the navel point, the 3rd Chakra. The combination of the energies generates the psychic heat that can release the Kundalini energy. This lock is applied with the exhale. It is also applied on the inhale when specified.

#### **Maha Bhandas**

This is the application of **all three Locks** at one time. When all the locks are applied, the nerves and glands are rejuvenated. The practice and perfection of Maha Bhandas is said to relieve wet dreams and preoccupation with sexual fantasy. It regulates blood pressure, reduces menstrual cramping and puts extra blood circulation into the lower glands: testes, ovaries, prostate, cowper's glands, skene's glands, etc..

## ***Special Notes for Women***

### ***MOON CYCLE***

You can practice Kundalini Yoga while on your menstrual cycle. However, at this time do not practice inverted poses, back bends or exercises involving vigorous movements. Generally, you do not want to disturb the downward flow.

### ***PREGNANCY***

#### ***Kundalini Yoga exercises that are especially GOOD to do while pregnant--***

Long deep breathing

Segmented breathing (Example: inhaling in 4 segments, exhaling in 4 segments)

Butterfly stretch

Life nerve stretch

Basic spinal exercises

Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels)

Upper body exercises such as Shoulder lifts and circles

Upper spinal twists with hands on shoulders (jut not too much twisting)

Neck rolls

Cat/Cow

Hip rotations done on hands and knees

Squatting (providing Dr approves) – builds leg muscles and stretches out the hips, preparing body for birth (start with 15 seconds, build up to longer time slowly)

A lot of walking! Start slow and build up to 20 minutes daily, this will help to recovery more quickly after birth

Meditation! Best antidote for stress, and stress-free is what you want to be during your pregnancy. There are SO many meditations in Kundalini Yoga. Two meditations that are highly recommended during pregnancy are: (1) Kirtan Kriya (6-11 minutes daily for mental and emotional balance), and (2) Adi Shakti meditation (5 minutes+ daily for heart-womb connection, emotional rejuvenation, breast self-care, conscious fertility)

#### ***Kundalini Yoga exercises to AVOID while pregnant--***

Avoid any exercise that compresses or puts a strain on the stomach area

No abdominal tightening

No stomach pumping

Avoid lying on your stomach

Avoid deep or rapid twisting

Avoid Breath of Fire, substitute with Long Deep Breathing

Avoid holding the breath

Avoid exercises that make you feel dizzy or cause you to lose your balance

Inversions are cautioned, especially after the 1st trimester, as the weight of the belly will compress the chest and make it difficult to breathe

Avoid lying on your back during postures during the latter part of pregnancy, find a way to lie on your side during relaxations (use lots of pillows, etc)

#### ***General notes – please read!***

***The goal of yoga during pregnancy is to maintain/improve flexibility, relieve stress, and learn how to maintain a relaxed state. However, guidelines for yoga and pregnancy are always an individual matter. Listen to your body and be sure to clear everything with your doctor.***

# ***Bibliography***

All information for this handout was gathered from the following sources:

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Teacher's Training Notebook: The Teachings of Yogi Bhajan, Ph.D.

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*Special Notes for Women compiled from various sources.*