



# Kundalini Yoga Cambodia

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### What is Yoga?

Yoga is a centuries-old science. Forms of physical and reflective practice as a means to develop the mind and for raising the human consciousness were part of old Egyptian, Chinese, Mayan and Indian cultures. Some of the oldest records were found in Tibet. As can be derived from the earliest written documents, yoga has been part of Indian culture as from the days of the Indus Valley Civilization, and it has been widely practiced on the Indian sub-continent ever since. It is therefore since a long time that Yoga provides practitioners with tools and techniques to explore the creative and spiritual potential that is inside every individual.

The sage Patanjali, who probably lived in the second century C.E., divided the practice of yoga into eight components: Yama, Niyama, Pranayama, Asana, Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. This eight-fold practice encompasses moral and disciplined living, the practice of breathing and exercise, and four levels of meditative practice.

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The eight different components of yoga are tools with which the practitioner can increase the awareness of the reality of being. This reality, at the physical level, is impermanent. At the same time, at the more subtle level, it is infinite and part of the Infinite Energy that encompasses all phenomena. Some people call this “Infinite, all-encompassing energy”: God; others call it Allah, or Buddha-mind, or Brahman; others explain it as non-dual mind, or the Supreme Consciousness.

Yoga is not a religion. In yoga, practitioners go beyond religious belief, working towards experiencing this infinite energy in their being and living.

The word Yoga, comes from the Sanskrit word “Jugit”, which means “to join together”, or “to unite”. Yoga is the practice to go beyond the individual consciousness, the individual ego, our dualistic thinking, and to experience infinite energy. This experience is also called the joining of the individual consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness, an experience and state of mind attributed to someone who has become enlightened.

A yogi is a person who follows a yogic lifestyle and who practices the different yoga techniques to achieve this unison, loosening the constrictions of ego and attachment driven life, and to live from the pure inner intention.

Traditionally, yoga comes in different forms or styles. Over the centuries different schools of yogic philosophy developed and different teachers emphasised different techniques often in response to the specific situation of that era and of the students.



Of the many schools, those focusing on service (karma yoga), devotion (bhakti yoga), sound (laya yoga), philosophy (jnana yoga), meditation (raja yoga), and physical mastery (hatha yoga) are the most common. Though each school and style of yoga stresses specific aspects: posture and/or exercising, breathing, mantra, meditation, ..., they all have the same roots and are all based on the same principles. Probably the best known and most practised yoga in the West these days is Hatha yoga with its various schools and developments such as Iyengar, Sivananda, Astanga, etc.

Similar to the use of many other traditional practices, these days yoga is easily integrated in the body and beauty obsessed culture that becomes rapidly globalised. In this culture, yoga is often associated with exercising and physical fitness, and packaged to respond to the newest fashion trends.



### **What is Kundalini Yoga?**

Kundalini Yoga is the school, or the collection of yoga knowledge and techniques, that aims at activating and mastering the elemental energy that is at the base of all phenomena that exist. This energy is the life energy in all beings and in each of us. The different Kundalini Yoga techniques have been tried and tested during the centuries of yoga development.

The primordial energy, often called 'Kundalini' or 'Kundalini Energy' is said to be largely dormant, and in ordinary life not used to its full extent. Through the practice of the techniques of Kundalini Yoga it is possible to awaken this energy and to make it connect with our mental and intuitive capacities. When this connection happens to its full potential the yoga practitioner will experience a state of clear consciousness and bliss, likened to the state of enlightenment.

Kundalini Yoga is at the very heart of Hatha Yoga and Tantra Yoga practice and belongs to the deeper teachings of these yogas. Depending on the focus of the yoga practice offered, different teachers and masters teach Kundalini Yoga techniques in an open or in less clearly identified manner.

The teachers that teach Kundalini Yoga in Phnom Penh are all certified teachers in the Kundalini Yoga style as taught by Yogi Bhajan.



## **Kundalini Yoga and Yogi Bhajan**

Yogi Bhajan (1929-2004) was born in India. He studied and practiced Kundalini Yoga from a very young age and became a master by the age of 16. After finalising his formal education he worked in the government service. Late 1968, he moved to the United States and started to teach the formerly secret knowledge of Kundalini Yoga publicly. Since then, he has taught many Kundalini Yoga teachers and teacher-trainers. Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan can now be learned in local classes in many countries around the world.

In the teaching of Yogi Bhajan, the Kundalini energy is the same as a person's creative energy and creative potential. This creative energy is present in every being, but in most people it is only partially developed and used.

By practicing Kundalini Yoga, the practitioner can 'awaken', activate and develop the Kundalini energy and connect with his or her full potential and capacity: the creative energy in each of us.

Yogi Bhajan calls Kundalini Yoga the yoga of awareness. Breathing, exercises, meditation, and an appropriate lifestyle are the means to achieve full awareness of body and mind, and of the gross and subtle connections with the immediate worldly environment, as well as with the often less obvious but equally real spiritual aspects of life.

Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan is a Raja (Royal) Yoga and brings together the different aspects of yoga: posture (Asana), breathing (Pranayama), sound (Mantra), hand and body positions (Mudra) and meditation. It offers a wide range of possibilities and exercise sets (Kriyas) for the practitioner to work on increasing awareness through group sessions and individual practice. Very practically, it will help to deal with the ever-changing conditions of day-to-day life, and to live life in a healthier and more balanced manner.

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### **Kundalini Yoga: Science? Religion?**

Kundalini Yoga is part of the ancient sciences bringing together the insights and reflections of philosophers, sages and spiritual practitioners who lived in different eras, and in different civilizations and cultures.

Not possessing the sophisticated technical means available to modern science, verification depended on direct and indirect experience, on physical and meditative observation and experimentation. Insights and knowledge developed over time through repetition and accumulation of experiences.

Findings were recorded and transmitted through philosophical treatises, but being not so easily understood by ordinary people, the insights and knowledge often took the form of epic stories, such as the Bhagavad-Gita and Ramayana stories, in which the universal forces are depicted as gods and goddesses, and in which evolutionary processes as well as the functioning of body, mind and soul have been translated into epic events.

All this has been carried forward in different philosophical and spiritual traditions, and blended into the cultures of the East and the West.

Kundalini Yoga techniques can be found in many traditions, often labeled Tantra, Tantric Yoga, or Tantric practices. Kundalini techniques are currently still taught by teachers from various backgrounds: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, Sikhism etc.



Being the head of the Sikh Dharma in the Western Hemisphere, in his teachings Yogi Bhajan uses many philosophical insights, texts, and mantras from the Sikh Religion, referring to the Sikh teachers and Sikh scriptures. However, his teachings are not limited to, or specific to the Sikh religion. In fact, the practice of Kundalini Yoga is not part of the religious and life practices of many Sikhs. Most Kundalini Yoga practitioners are not Sikh either.

Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan is experiential, making use of and developing the capacity for direct individual experience. Kundalini Yoga is open to, and makes equally use of the practices and wisdom that come from other spiritual and philosophical traditions.

Through studies and research the USA based Kundalini Research Institute, and other organizations and scientific institutions as well, try to find connections between the ancient science of yoga with the insights of modern science.



### **Is Kundalini yoga a medical system?**

Kundalini Yoga is not designed as a curative system. Nevertheless exercises and meditations can be chosen for a particular purpose, for example to strengthen specific glands, organs or body parts, to clean the energy channels (nadis), so energy can move freely through the body and subtle energy fields, or to release stress and old pain from the psyche. Practising these techniques develops good health and balances body, mind and soul. One feels connected with and nourished by one's inner creative energy (the Kundalini energy) and the outer, infinite energy, which enables living a creative, happy and fulfilling life.

The different yoga techniques can be effectively used to deal with physical and mental problems that are the result of stress, emotions, illness, pain. Practising exercises, breathing and meditation can help to alleviate, to diminish, and/or to soften the impact of physical and mental problems, and can help to be able to regain joyful living. The techniques can also help in the final stages of life, and help to go through the final transition and to prepare for peaceful dying.

Yogi Bhajan emphasises the importance of practising yoga regularly because only through devoted practice can each person develop the individual potentials and capacities in the way suitable to the individual person. Regular practice is also necessary to be able to handle the stress and emotions caused by the rapid changes in our modern society. The fast pace of modern living is, according to Yogi Bhajan, closely related to the astrological condition of our time, being caused and reinforced by the at present ongoing transition from the Piscean Age to the Aquarian Age.

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### **Can Yoga be dangerous?**

In general, yoga and the yoga techniques commonly practiced are suitable for people of all ages who are in a good physical condition. Some restrictions exist for yoga with young children. For people with physical and mental limitations and disabilities some adaptation of exercises may be necessary.

It depends on the knowledge and skill of the teacher, and the level of training and the condition of the practitioner, to what extent yoga practice can be beneficial or risky.

As with the practice of all physical exercises (and similar to the use of any learning and skill development) in case of insufficient qualification or unsuitable personal conditions, the practice can be dangerous in the same way driving a car can be dangerous when driving without taking driving lessons, or when being drunk.

Although all yoga exercises are beneficial in general and may help to improve the overall health condition, people who are ill, suffer from chronic pain or disease, or who have particular health conditions are recommended to consult their health advisor before starting yoga.



### **Can Kundalini Yoga be dangerous?**

Yogi Bhajan answered this question saying that the biggest danger for yoga practice was all the talk about yoga being dangerous as this would stop people to try, practice and experience the benefits of these ancient techniques.

Regarding the question if Kundalini Yoga can be dangerous he mentioned that there is nothing dangerous about Kundalini Yoga practice, as we only seek to awaken the creative energy that is already inside us, and to develop and live our lives using our full potential and capacity.

In case there is any danger, it is similar to that of every yoga: teaching or practicing the techniques without proper knowledge or not being in the right condition. Practicing this complete yoga with one-sided attention to specific techniques only, or without paying properly attention to the instructions is likely to limit the benefits and lead to distorted results.

When practicing yoga it is important to always connect to ones own body, and not to force body, breath and mind beyond what is comfortable, exploring ones limits, pain areas, and blockages with awareness and kindness. Improvements in flexibility and strength, healing, and balance will come over time.

Conditions that are unfavourable for the practice of yoga include the use of alcohol, drugs, and medication that affect the nervous and endocrine systems of the body.

A healthy lifestyle, however, will support the positive effects of a yoga practice.