

## CHAPTER 23



# *Roles & Responsibilities in the Class Setting*

*"Wisdom is when you honor  
your profession or status."*

- YOGI BHAJAN

### *This chapter includes . . .*

YOGA CLASS STRUCTURE & GOALS	280
Teaching & Class Structure	280
The Teacher's Projection	280
The Adi Mantra	280
The Mangala Charn Mantra	280
How to Begin?	281
Pranayam	281
Warm-up Exercises	281
Yogi Bhajan on the Purity of the Teachings	281
Yogi Bhajan on Using Music in Class	282
Kriya or Set of Yoga Exercises	282
Supervising the Class & Offering Correction	282
Yogi Bhajan on Doing Yoga with the Class	282
Deep Relaxation	283
Meditation	283
Ending a Kundalini Yoga Class	283
Yoga Community	283
Evaluating the Class Afterward	283
Explaining Some of the Benefits of Kundalini Yoga	284
Teaching Guidelines—Cautions & Approaches	285
Hands-off Teaching • Do Not Vary From the Kriya • Medical Conditions	
Kundalini Yoga is not Illness Based • Approaching Yoga Practice •	
Sample Disclaimer • "Good" Pain & "Bad" Pain • No Drugs •	
Yoga While Pregnant or Menstruating •	
Preparing to Teach	287
Preparing the Environment	288
Relationship with Students	288

## Yoga Class Structure & Goals

KUNDALINI YOGA IS THE SCIENCE OF HOW TO FULFILL ourselves in the experience of being human and how to serve others. It is designed to give us the experience of connection, to respond to the command of the soul and the Infinite. Students are attracted to Kundalini Yoga for these reasons. Initially, beginning yoga students often think of yoga in practical terms: to increase strength; to overcome stress; to become more flexible; to learn to relax; to work on their breathing. Many also come to class to deal with health problems—some referred by health practitioners. However, Kundalini Yoga was never illness-based. It was never designed as a curative system. When students come to your class, it is not your role to diagnose or assign individual techniques for healing. [See *Cautions & Medical Conditions* this chapter.]

### The Teacher's Projection

The voice of a yoga teacher should be expressive and personal in the introduction, clear and audible in all corners of the room while explaining the exercises and leading the mantras, and soothing and steady during the relaxation.

*Speaking in class.* Yoga really does all the work! As a beginning instructor, trust the *kriyas* and meditations. It is alright to keep comments short. With experience, you will develop the ability to speak confidently about the deeper topics and philosophy of yoga. Eventually, you will want to communicate the goals of Kundalini Yoga, as well as the uniqueness of a particular class. The class may have a particular theme, like stress reduction, or the heart center. It is best to not be dry or intellectual, and rather to speak from the heart.

The questions and expectations many students have often change radically as they alter their state of consciousness. So, many questions that are present before class become superfluous after class. You can use this knowledge to time your remarks for when the students are in a receptive state.

### The Adi Mantra

#### Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō

"Whenever you chant *Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō*, through the grace and blessing of Guru Ram Das, *Bhagvati*, the creative power of the universe, God, the Ultimate, the Infinite, dwells in you as a yogi, and that is what you teach. Concentrate on the Heavens when you chant it. See what a difference it makes."

—YOGI BHAIJAN, *Kundalini Rising! Spring 1994*

To center ourselves before Kundalini Yoga we chant the Adi Mantra in Pranam

Mudra (Prayer Pose) 3-5 times, or as long as it takes for the class to come into receptivity. [See the *Sound & Mantra Chapter*.] You can practice at home before class, in order to find your comfort level and perfect the pitch.

The Adi Mantra connects us to the Golden Chain, the inner spark of kundalini that links us to the masters and saints who have preceded us on this path. [See *The Golden Chain chapter*.] The Adi Mantra centers us into the higher self and reminds our lower minds that it is not our ego that will practice or teach Kundalini

### Teaching & Class Structure

The beginner comes in innocence, curiosity, and sometimes in pain. Treat each student as a treasure. Inspire, challenge, and guide.

Bring direction and energy to the class to address and serve the students. Be attentive and flexible to the needs of each participant, and lead them through an experience of the kundalini energy. You might survey expectations in certain types of classes, but ultimately you lead the energy. So:

- ▶ Tune in with the Adi Mantra  
(See *Sound & Mantra chapter*.)
- ▶ Pranayam and/or appropriate warm-up *kriya* if needed  
(See *Warm-up Exercises, next page*.)
- ▶ Kriya
- ▶ Relaxation
- ▶ Meditation  
(The order of meditation and relaxation may be reversed. Follow instructions of the *kriya* and meditation chosen.)
- ▶ Ending prayer and *Long Sat Naams*.
- ▶ If possible, create the opportunity for the students to socialize and ask questions. You could serve Yogi Tea.

Yoga. If the limited individual ego in which we normally live is a small pond, then *Ong Namō* releases us into a vast and endless ocean. *Guru Dev Namō* gives us the experience of the wisest sailor and all of the charts, to guide us to the many ports we are to serve and experience.

### The Mangala Charn Mantra

#### Ad Guray Nameh, Jugad Guray Nameh, Sat Guray Namey, Siri Guru Devay Nameh

You may choose to chant the Mangala Charn mantra 3 times after the Adi Mantra.

NOW WHAT DO YOU DO? You have prepared, tuned-in, and introduced the goal of yoga. Where do you begin? Kundalini Yoga has thousands of techniques and many levels of ideas. Do you start with a strenuous set to give an experience they won't forget? Do you give a survey of all the chakras and subtle bodies? Do you share a spiritual discussion of potential?

### How to Begin?

A wonderful book called *Toolkit for Beginners* is a good place to get tips for teaching beginners. It is available through *Ancient Healing Ways*.

Our task is to help the students cultivate and use their awareness: body awareness, mental awareness, spiritual awareness, social awareness. Start with the breath, an easy yoga set or *kriya*, and some comments on aspects of the eight limbs of yoga practice. After tuning in, a good place to start a beginner's class is with breath awareness—*pranayam*—particular, Long Deep Breathing.

### Pranayam

A Kundalini Yoga class is not just a series of exercises that stretch or stimulate the body. Kundalini Yoga moves energy, and *pranayam* is the most vital tool in this process. Breath awareness requires concentration. It brings attention to the breath as the vital link to life. The breath regulates the energy of life, the quality of emotions, and the ability to direct the mind. Most people have not developed a relationship with the breath. Share your awareness. Consistently and frequently draw attention to the flow of breath and to the subtle nature and effects of the breath.

In every class, it is a good idea to include *pranayam*. A single class is not enough to instill the idea of the power of the breath's potential. The first step in preparing for a successful effort in yoga is to be sure that our internal energy wires are properly connected and in good condition. If these channels of pranic energy flow and the meridians are not open and coordinated, maximum impact cannot be realized. The yogic name for those channels is *nadis*. Gradual, steady practice is required. Yogi Bhajan called this "channel cleansing." All the exercises and meditations that follow a balanced *pranayam* will be effective. So you may use a *pranayam* to energize the body and quiet the mind before beginning a yoga set or *kriya*.

Especially in an on-going class where new people are coming in on a regular basis, remind students to relax their shoulders, and inhale and exhale only through the nose—unless otherwise indicated. Make sure that they do not switch from true Long Deep Breathing or Breath of Fire to paradoxical breathing—where they pull the abdomen in on the inhale and relax it on the exhale.

In these exercises the breath will regulate itself, and in

doing so, create important breathing patterns. Many exercises are ended with one to three long deep breaths to consolidate the benefits of the exercise.

### Warm-up Exercises

Yogi Bhajan never taught warm-up exercises himself when leading Kundalini Yoga *kriyas*, but acknowledges that in some instances warm-ups can be useful. Here are the options to choose from if you determine it is necessary to include a warm-up before teaching a Kundalini Yoga *kriya*:

- ▶ You may choose any short Kundalini Yoga *kriya*. Some examples of good Kundalini Yoga *kriyas* for warm-up purposes are listed at the end of the Sets chapter.
- ▶ Pranayam sequences are especially good for waking up the body and opening the lungs.
- ▶ Do a few repetitions of the short version of Sun Salutations (*Surya Namaskar*) included in this Manual. (Yogi Bhajan taught this in the seventies, so we include it in the Kundalini Yoga archives!)
- ▶ You may also lead Spinal Flex, Cat-Cow, and Life Nerve Stretches, all of which can stand alone, or which can be used as a warm-up series.
- ▶ You can also recommend that students do their own stretching exercises before coming to class, or before the class begins.

When leading warm-ups, always identify when you begin the *kriya*. In this way, the students are clear about the sequence of the *kriya*, and understand that we maintain the integrity of sets as they were taught by Yogi Bhajan.

### Yogi Bhajan on the Purity of the Teachings

I am asked a very funny question: "Can we have a little deviation from what is there in the Teachings, and make up our own thing?" Do you know what this tells me? This man cannot accept the teachings, and if he cannot do this, he will never be a Teacher.

My personal weaknesses are my personal weaknesses. My personal strength is my personal strength. So long as the Lord has given me the breath of life, I'll carry the Teachings and deliver them as they are. I shall never add or subtract anything.

### **Yogi Bhajan on Using Music in Class**

Yogi Bhajan has remarked that music can be used in class, but only Kundalini Yoga music (songs or mantras that Yogi Bhajan has given in his classes.) As beautiful and relaxing as some New Age or other type of music may be, it is not for use in Kundalini Yoga classes.

"Kundalini Yoga is to create inner energy, not provoke outer energy. Music must be within a certain rhythm. Music that is more physical or mental than spiritual can stop the rhythm. Ours should be more spiritual. Commitment to self is not a joke. Commotional music is not required. If the music is not soothing, if it creates commotion, it is not allowed. A yoga class needs elevation, projection of the proper combination and permutation of words which push you through. You need a rocket for taking this space shuttle, right? Now what are you going to do? Use a few fans and think it is going up? That's wrong. Kundalini Yoga is not a pop festival, nor is it a rock and roll concert. It has those subtle projections through which the person can go inward. When you are teaching, be with the purity of the essence as you have been taught."

—YOGI BHAJAN

It is acceptable to play Kundalini Yoga music during meditations that do not have a specific mantra or breath rhythm indicated. If you find yourself in a teaching situation where there is no Kundalini Yoga music available, Yogi Bhajan has said that Indian classical music (instrumental only), and particularly Rag Asa, is acceptable.



### **Kriya or Set of Yoga Exercises**

Choose the *kriya* or yoga set that suits the students' ability and interests. (See *Class Preparation*.)

- ▶ Study the exercises before the class, or do the *kriya* yourself, so you can formulate your thoughts about how to teach the *kriya* beforehand.
- ▶ Explain the exercises clearly and demonstrate as needed, but do not do the yoga set with the class. Your job is to watch, guide, inspire and time the exercises. Verbally correct students' postures as needed.
- ▶ Remind students that their experience is enhanced when keeping their eyes closed. (Unless indicated otherwise.)
- ▶ Remind students to relax any muscles not needed. Students often put unnecessary tension in their face, neck and shoulders while doing Sat Kriya and Breath of Fire.
- ▶ Emphasize that students respect their body's limits, as each person is unique. Poses with extreme angles should be attained very gradually.

### **Supervising the Class & Offering Correction**

The teacher guides the pace, often getting the class moving in a gentle steady rhythm.

- ▶ Pay attention to the students and use various methods for demonstrating, reminding, and correcting. Students can easily overwork or overstretch the body, so watch them to see if they are performing the exercises correctly.
- ▶ Demonstrate the exercises, but do not go deeply into an exercise. In a yoga set or *kriya* for beginners, older people, and people with health problems, you may reduce the given time.
- ▶ Do encourage students to try the exercises for the full time. Some students will need to build up strength. If they feel that they must stop doing the exercise, have them concentrate on their breath. Direct them to start again as they feel able, whether it be for the same exercise or the next one. When Yogi Bhajan originally taught beginners in 1969, he would give one to eight exercises. They would rest 30 seconds to 3 minutes between exercises. The length of rest depended on how strenuous the exercise was. The rest period often included concentration on the flow of the breath. The mantra *Sat Naam* was spoken silently: *Sat* on the inhale, and *Naam* on the exhale.
- ▶ To stay in the present, students can also be encouraged to focus at the Third Eye Point. Reminders can be made throughout the class.

### **Yogi Bhajan on Doing Yoga with the Class**

You want to do the exercises with them? Who is going to look after the students when you are into your own exercises, and they are doing something else? Your job is to watch. You are the supervisor, you are not the exerciser. That's why as a teacher you sit higher, so that you can look at what is going on. It's your responsibility. You are responsible for the clock.

### **Deep Relaxation**

The ability to relax is a divine quality. We are more centered and become more sensitive to the energy patterns of life. The state of consciousness we experience in this deep relaxation will not just be sleep. Deep relaxation alters the glandular balance in the blood and alters the functioning of the brain. Students may have out-of-body experiences; they may have vivid dreams; they may remember nothing at all after closing their eyes. Usually they will not go into a regular shallow sleep unless they continue relaxing for an extended time. As a teacher, never participate in the relaxation. Your role is to hold the space, to make it secure for everyone.

The best position for deep relaxation is Corpse Pose: students lie on the back with arms at the sides, palms up, ankles uncrossed, and eyes closed. Suggest that students may want to cover themselves with a blanket or shawl. You can develop routines to guide students through relaxing the different parts of the body. You can use visualization. If you use music make it quiet and restful—3HO has a variety of tapes that are peaceful and spiritually uplifting. Playing the gong is another option, if you have received training from 3HO to do so. The period of deep relaxation depends on the strenuousness of the yoga set and the experience of the students. Eight to eleven minutes is a normal amount of relaxation. At the end of the relaxation, use the stretching routine to come out of deep relaxation, as described in Chapter 10 on Relaxation.

The relaxation can occur after the yoga set or *kriya* or at the end of the class after the meditation. The effects of the *kriyas* and chanting are cumulative. They build for a long time after students have done them. Allow time for the energies they have released in the body and mind to circulate and come to equilibrium without involving the ego as a "director of the show." The body knows how to naturally balance itself. It is automatic.

### **Meditation**

Meditation is a necessary complement to physical yoga exercises. Sometimes the meditation is already included in the yoga set. You may choose a meditation that fits with the yoga set you have chosen. Or you may choose to enhance the experience of one meditation over a series of classes.

Have a few moments or minutes of silent reflection after the meditation. Then have the class vigorously shake their hands over the head for grounding. And then rub the palms together before singing the 3HO ending prayer.

### **Ending a Kundalini Yoga Class**

Sitting in Easy Pose with the hands together in Pranam Mudra, eyes closed, conclude the class by singing the Sunshine Song, in the same heart-centered neutrality that we used for tuning in.

Then, chant *Long Sat Naams* one to three times. In this chant the sound *Saaaaaat* is seven times as long as *Naam*. *Naam* is sung at a minor third lower than *Sat*. This chant allows students to experience the harmony created by the class. If you feel moved to do so, you may also offer a few more words as a non-denominational prayer for peace, asking blessings for those present in the class. The teacher may want to express gratitude for our teacher, Yogi Bhajan, and pray for his health and well-being. Then students and teacher may bow together in a sign of respect and gratitude to the infinite kundalini energy and the universal consciousness. Bowing is an exercise that brings circulation to the brain and therefore stimulates the process of absorbing what was taught. It also brings the head lower than the heart, symbolizing the process of going beyond the mere mental acceptance of the teachings to opening the heart to receive them. Especially in countries where bowing is not customary, you can explain the science behind the yogic tradition of bowing.

### **Yoga Community**

Another purpose of a yoga class is to provide information and encouragement about your local and worldwide yoga community. It is a wonderful thing to associate with a group of people who appreciate and practice your discipline. You realize you are not alone. You can compare experiences and receive inspiration. Take the time to inform your students about the Aquarian Teacher Training program as an excellent way to learn Kundalini Yoga in depth. Let them know that this path creates teachers, not just students. Also you'll find that inspired yoga students enjoy the chance to serve and volunteer for activities, so let them know of such opportunities as they arise. You'll build a strong yoga community the more your students become involved.

### **Evaluating the Class Afterward**

Most importantly, was it an inspiring yoga class? Did it come from your heart, and did it really touch your students? You can ask for verbal feedback, or you can create an evaluation form for students to use at the end of a class series. This should be done in the spirit of better serving the students' needs, and learning how you can improve your presentation of the teachings.

## Explaining Some of the Benefits of Kundalini Yoga

Kundalini Yoga is a process that takes us beyond the mind to where we can follow our hearts. So the mind can never fully comprehend or explain yoga. We can teach with little explanation or a lot—depending on our personal style. Before or after class or at certain stages in class, any of the following explanations can be useful. You may also want to produce your own handout.

### Angles & triangles

Yogi Bhajan says: "Kundalini Yoga is the science of angles and triangles." Every angle we hold our body in has a corresponding energetic effect because the muscles are putting pressure on specific parts of the body. For example, lifting the legs 30 degrees works on the Navel Point; lifting the arms 60 degrees works on the heart and lungs. The effect also has to do with the ability of different shapes and forms to concentrate the life force.

### Strengthening the nervous system

We know that nerves constantly grow and change both in their density of connection and the sophistication of the patterns with which they interconnect. Yoga engages the nerves and makes them function better.

### Stretching and building muscles

Any muscle that is not used regularly, even if it is only over a period of a few days, starts to atrophy. Muscle atrophy is visible in the stooped and narrow shoulders of older people who have stopped exercising. Kundalini Yoga is an incredibly complete form of exercise for the muscles to maintain the strength and flexibility of the body.

### Stimulating circulation

Due to increased heart rate and the internal massage of tissues and organs, Kundalini Yoga increases the circulation of blood, lymph, and other body fluids.

Endocrine glands, the guardians of your health, have no muscles to get their products into the blood. Yoga massages them, empties them, keeps them vital, and helps them to communicate with each other. Many of the yoga exercises adjust the functioning of the endocrine glands by stimulating the primary base of the brain (the hypothalamus), through rhythmical breathing and through the effect of sound and mantra.

### Kundalini Yoga as biofeedback

Kundalini Yoga gives increased awareness of the body's internal processes.

### Muscles as energy catalysts

There is a connection between the muscles and the meridians or *nadis*. If a muscle is strong, the meridian connected to it will be healthy energetically and vice versa. That's why specific meridians and organs are influenced by training specific muscles.

### Cleansing the tissues

No matter how good the diet is, we tend to exceed the self-cleansing capacity of our bodies. Uric acid, calcium crystals, and many other wastes and poisons get stored in tissues and joints. They make us stiff and may cause many diseases. In Kundalini Yoga muscle stretching and internal massage bring wastes back into circulation so that the lungs, intestines, kidneys, and skin are able to remove them.

### Kundalini Yoga as lifestyle

Yoga is not just exercises. We can find opportunities to recommend daily healthy practices—rising early, taking a cold shower, wearing light-colored clothing, and trying other aspects of yogic lifestyle. A vegetarian diet alone reduces the risk of chronic diseases. A yogic lifestyle offers support to refrain from toxic habits such as smoking, drinking, and taking drugs. And it also supports withdrawal from caffeine and non-prescription drugs.

### The Chakras

An understanding of the eight chakras of the body, and how the practice of *kriyas*, *pranayam*, and meditation effects them, is perhaps the most encompassing explanation of the effects of Kundalini Yoga.

### The Ten Bodies

Kundalini Yoga directly activates and balances each of our Ten Bodies. These changes echo and reverberate throughout the dimensions of our being, and have a powerful effect on our spiritual growth.

## Teaching Guidelines: Cautions & Approaches

See also "Common Questions from Students"

### Hands-Off Teaching

In a Kundalini Yoga class, we never adjust students' postures by physical touch. Yogi Bhajan has specifically told us to verbally correct students or have someone in the class who is doing the posture correctly model for the class.

### Do Not Vary From the Kriya

During a Kundalini Yoga class, we do not teach variations of the exercises in a *kriya*. Variations of many postures exist in Kundalini Yoga, (i.e. there are many ways to stretch the life nerve: one leg at a time; both legs together; with the legs stretched wide apart,) but we teach them only when instructed in specific *kriyas*, and we do not tell students that they can choose a variation of a posture as they wish. That is changing the *kriya*. When asked about this specifically, Yogi Bhajan told us: "Variations are not anything but going down a muddy road. You'll have to take a very long route and use a lot more energy, so why go away from the original path, when it is straight and simple? Teachers have not to show their ego, they have to show their discipline."

Shakti Parwha Kaur, author of *Kundalini Yoga: The Flow of Eternal Power*, whom Yogi Bhajan calls the 'Mother of 3HO,' always tells her students to do their best, and that even by leaning in the right direction they will benefit. Yogi Bhajan agrees with this approach. He has said that if someone feels they cannot safely do a particular exercise, it is best to skip the exercise (and just do the breathing or mantra), and allow the energy of the class to carry them. "It is accurate to sit in a yoga class of students who are generating the energy. If you cannot do a pose, their energy will empower you equally. And if you have any medical problems, listen to your doctor first, because he is guardian of your body and health."

Yogi Bhajan has approved shortening the times of postures during a *kriya* to adjust to the level of the students in the class. However, teachers should never make the exercises or meditations longer than indicated by Yogi Bhajan. As the Master of Kundalini Yoga, he has given us the maximum times needed for the desired effect.

Yogi Bhajan has given us these general guidelines to follow and although Yogi Bhajan himself never taught what we might call 'substitutions' or 'modifications,' when asked, he did say it was fine for someone who absolutely cannot sit in Rock Pose to do Sat Kriya lying on the back, using the same mudra with the hands straight pointing to the ceiling, and the knees bent, feet flat on the floor. He said that it is acceptable for a student who cannot lift both legs at once, to lift one a time—and that only if and when

their doctor indicates they are strong enough, should they lift both legs at once.

The type of instruction given in the Posture and Form and Alignment chapters of this Manual, enable students to gradually improve Kundalini Yoga postures, and overcome or compensate for physical weaknesses. The use of simple props as taught by Guru Prem Singh, the Posture Master, as Yogi Bhajan calls him, can also help students improve. However, Yogi Bhajan is very clear that the use of props should not be taught during Kundalini Yoga *kriyas*. "Many times our bodies get 'out of posture.' Guru Prem Singh is doing his best telling people how to bring the body back to the posture, and how to learn the art of breathing, which is not common in Westerners. So, it is very important, but it should not be done during the *kriya*."

In other words, when it is deemed essential, the teacher may assist a student with props, but not during the *kriya*. Ideally, this would be done before or after the class starts, or in a special workshop for this purpose.

### Medical Conditions

As teachers, we are not responsible for helping students with their medical problems. If a student requests help for any physical or psychological problem, it is important to refer them to a health or healing professional.

For the students' safety and for your own protection, it is a good idea to have students sign a disclaimer explaining how they should approach their yoga practice.

Yogi Bhajan with all his vast ability and knowledge as a healer, makes a distinction that he is offering his experience and sharing it with others, which they may or may not choose to apply. Kundalini Yoga teachers are not diagnosticians. Even if you have the capacity in another role, that is not your role when you teach Kundalini Yoga. Make it clear to the students that they are responsible for their own health. They should consult with their doctors if they have medical conditions and if they are taking prescription drugs.

We have a wealth of valuable information, such as drinking Yogi Tea™ and taking specific herbs, but in our role as Kundalini Yoga teachers we only offer general information; we do not prescribe anything for individual conditions.

### Kundalini Yoga is not Illness-based

Kundalini Yoga as a system was never illness based. It wasn't started as a system to cure anything. As a system, it is not inherently a therapeutic model, even though it has enormous

## CAUTIONS &amp; APPROACHES

therapeutic benefits. Rather, it was based in excellence and exaltation. It is the science of how to excel and fulfill oneself in the experience of being human. We do not teach Kundalini Yoga to heal a disease. We teach yoga to the person who has the disease. Kundalini Yoga is a sacred science. The sacredness of the student is awakened through it. It is designed to give us the experience of connection, to respond to the command of the soul and the Infinite.

There are no Kundalini Yoga *kriyas* specifically for the kinds of diseases that are encountered in today's world. Even when Yogi Bhajan says that, "This is for such and such," he is most often speaking of prevention.

It is written that, in 40 days, a practitioner using Kundalini Yoga as an experience, creates uplift and liberation. It might take twenty years using many other techniques. But that was assuming the person who engages in this should first be mentally stable, have strong habits, have a clear mind, and a pure body. Most people don't fit those qualifications, and it takes a little longer to use the same practices to clear the subconscious and to organize the mind toward the soul and the Infinite, instead of toward our finiteness and neurosis.

### Approaching Yoga Practice

Keep in mind that as a teacher, you have no idea what condition, history or shape a person is in when they come to practice yoga. Many people are coming from very sedentary lifestyles, with contracted muscles and spines. Many middle-aged people are now

#### Sample Disclaimer

We invite you to enthusiastically approach your yoga practice. However, we encourage you to use care when determining your own ability to do the exercises offered in these classes. Do not aggravate an existing injury. If you have a doubt as to whether yoga would be recommended if you have a particular injury or condition, please consult your health care professional.

The instruction and advice presented at this Kundalini Yoga class is not meant to be used in lieu of professional medical or psychological care for the treatment of any condition.

There are certain limitations to the practice of yoga for pregnant and menstruating women. Please read the handout about this or ask the instructor.

embracing yoga, increasing the need for care. It is wise to offer the idea that yoga is not a competitive sport, that slow, consistency is more valuable than pushing in achieving their goals. Always err on the side of caution.

### "Good" Pain and "Bad" Pain

Just as in any form of physical activity, there are two forms of pain that may occur during the practice of yoga postures. The first is the normal distress that comes from fatigue or effort when extending a muscle or stimulating a nerve. Just as holding your arm out parallel to the ground can feel heavy and uncomfortable after a few minutes. This pain is not harmful and will go away with concentration, a slow controlled breath, and a welcome flood of endorphins. This type of pain reflex is often a signal about the condition and balance of the glandular and nervous systems. It is a commonly experienced phenomenon in athletics and Kundalini Yoga, even with small efforts, as we are working on nerves and glands, not just muscles.

The second type of pain comes from structural problems, bruises, inner organ difficulties, and referred pain from a variety of injuries and illnesses. It will not pass, nor should it be ignored or "worked through." Stop the posture and check with your medical advisor. Examples of this are disk problems, infections, swollen glands, or sprained ligaments. When there is pain, numbness, or lack of muscle control in the arms or legs, or difficulty controlling urination or defecation, it is evidence of a significant neurologic problem. In each of these cases, seek professional advice.

### No Drugs

Students are cautioned never to practice Kundalini Yoga while under the influence of alcohol or non-prescription, recreational drugs. Students must obtain and follow the advice of their physician concerning the practice of yoga while taking prescription drugs.

### Yoga While Pregnant or Menstruating

Inform the pregnant woman that she should get permission from her doctor to take yoga classes. Refer the pregnant woman to prenatal yoga classes, if available. During pregnancy, all physical exercise should be calm and quiet. She should be encouraged to listen to her body and to rest when necessary, even if the exercise is not finished.

The following exercises should not be done during pregnancy after the 120th day, or if a woman has any medical complications:

- ▶ Exercises which apply pressure to the abdominal area. (i.e., Bow Pose, etc.), or which are over-stimulating.

▶ **Breath of Fire.** Yogi Bhajan has stated that *light* Breath of Fire in the first 3 months is permissible if health permits. She should check with her doctor.

▶ *Mulbandh*

▶ Leg lifts (except while lying on the side.)

▶ Exercising to the point of exhaustion

▶ Exercises which raise the pulse above 140 beats per minute

▶ All inverted postures (i.e. shoulder stand)

▶ Sat Kriya

▶ Lying on the back (or front, of course) after the fourth to sixth month, as it can be uncomfortable and even dangerous for the mother as the weight of the baby unfavorably stresses the mother's blood pressure. Suggest she relax lying on her side and avoid any postures that involve lying on the back.

▶ Women should not do Venus Kriyas at all during pregnancy.

*Walking Meditation during pregnancy:* Yogi Bhajan recommends that pregnant women spend a lot of time meditating and chanting during pregnancy. He also suggests that pregnant couples walk 5 miles a day together, at a flow, steady pace, to prepare the woman for childbirth. A walking meditation called *Charn Jap* is suggested, where the couple walks hand in hand, chanting *Sat Naam* with the left step, *Wahe Guru* with the right step.

*For tips on teaching Pre- and Post-Natal Yoga, see chapter 25.*

*Menstruating:* This in general applies to women on the first day of the menstrual cycle and the next if the flow is heavy. However, a light Breath of Fire is permissible. Women are encouraged to increase awareness of their bodies limitations and capacity during menstruation. A light Breath of Fire can actually adjust the menstruation, especially if the student has a regular practice of Breath of Fire in *kriyas*.



## Preparing to Teach

YOU ARE A CHANNEL OF A GREAT TRADITION OF TEACHING. You are a member of a growing profession of consciousness educators. To the student you represent higher consciousness. The student does not come to you for your personal identity, they come to you for the experience of their own identity.

The energy that flows through us when we teach flows through the Golden Chain. It is passed from consciousness to consciousness. The student who surrenders to the discipline is not surrendering to the personality of the teacher, but to the light that is present in the teaching. You are a golden conduit to all who come. Preparing to teach involves working on that flame—your consciousness, so you can uphold a yogic lifestyle. Morning *sadhana* of some kind, 40-day meditations, White Tantric Yoga, reading from the Siri Guru Granth Sahib are all ways to maintain your elevated projection. Maintaining a conscious diet, and occasionally doing cleansing diets can help you feel light, inspiring, and energetic.

### What do I do to prepare myself before class?

The effect you create in class is proportional to your ability to set your own ego aside and let the energy and purity of the teachings flow through you. Before class, make sure you are represented with your expanded aura, openness, and neutrality. Wear dignified white or ivory, cotton, silk, or wool clothing. For energy, Yogi Bhajan recommends that you take a bath or shower before teaching. Also if you have short hair, run your fingers under cold water, then run them through your hair and over your scalp, and comb your hair back and forth. Then cover your whole head with white natural fabric in order to command your sixth chakra. And if you use a turban you will automatically get a cranial self-adjustment as well. You can also comb your hair forward and backward a few times about 4 p.m. every day to renew your energy. (Use a wooden comb.)

**Arrive early.** Take time to reflect on the Laws of Sustenance and Deliverance and the Golden Chain. Prepare for a few minutes in personal silence by repeating the Teacher's Oath and the Adi Mantra. The effect you create is intensified by speaking from the Heart Center. Yogi Bhajan cautions you to remember that teaching is not a personal popularity contest. You don't have to be popular, you have to have impact.

### Is it permissible to chant *Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō* silently before teaching, instead of aloud?

Yogi Bhajan answered this question: "No. Sound purifies the inner and outer environments. This mantra is for tuning the

## PREPARING THE ENVIRONMENT

flow of personal energy with universal energy. That's a fact. Do it with the group to tune them in, too."

In a lecturing environment, since it is not a formal Kundalini Yoga class, the teacher may chant silently to link to guidance.

**How do I prepare material for class?**

You must know the material so that you are not distracted by a book or pages of notes. It looks unprofessional to read from a book. Instead you might make a brief summary on a page or file card to discreetly jog your memory. When beginning to teach, a good way to learn the material is to teach the class to yourself every day for a week, perhaps as part of your daily *sadhana*. Take advantage of your personal gifts in teaching. If you are musical, or literary, or humorous, or analytical, use these gifts. You can prepare written material for students as well, such as tips for practicing at home or the words and pronunciation of mantras.

**Preparing the Environment**

Kundalini Yoga can be taught under any circumstances and in all environments. It is strong enough to create an energy field everywhere. However, this is easier when we are in a:

- ▶ quiet, well-aired room
- ▶ with moderate temperature
- ▶ with ample space per student
- ▶ with a carpet or other padding such as yoga mats available
- ▶ with indirect lighting which can be dimmed
- ▶ with a raised platform for the teacher to sit on

(Optional. This is more important with large classes.)

Many classes will take place under less than ideal circumstances, especially in community centers, fitness centers, church basements, corporate meeting rooms, and schools and universities. If you have the opportunity, it is a good idea to visit the location ahead of time. You will see what adjustments have to be made for the new class and will have time to make them. Will the room be physically clean? Is it musty? Can you open the windows? Can you adjust thermostats, air conditioning, and lighting? Are there yoga mats? Try out the sound system. Often simple things will improve the environment dramatically—a table lamp and candles will replace fluorescent lights. A table cloth and vase of flowers help, so does soothing 3HO music. You can never go wrong serving yogi tea after class.

Pay attention to what goes on in adjacent rooms or outdoors. When you teach your class: will there be soccer, basketball, figure skating, or choir practice next door? Will there be an aerobics

class with heavy rhythms? Is there rush-hour traffic? If it will be noisy, try to change the situation—try another location or adjust the class time.

**Relationship with Students**

Remember that it is a privilege to teach. It is an honor to sit in front of a class, to have their attention and trust. You represent the students' higher consciousness. So teach from a neutral place within yourself—that place that is neither man nor woman, nor personal self. That place is the teacher, and you pledge to teach from that place. You teach to give others an experience of their identity, purity, and infinity. As Yogi Bhanjan demonstrates, we are "personally impersonal" with students.

At the same time, in order to give others an experience of who they are, you teach from who *you* are, give examples from your own stories. Share your humanity. How has this technique or exercise helped you? What were your experiences during this meditation? What challenges have you overcome through your practice?

On the other hand, we don't promote ourselves. You are not all-knowing. Make it easy for students to ask questions, humbly admit to what you don't know, and make every attempt to find out the answer. You are not trying to be popular, only to serve. Does the mail carrier take credit for the content of the letter?

You serve all your students equally without discrimination. You cannot tell from outward appearance or action anything about the destiny of your students. Your job is to help them to discover that destiny for themselves.

You should not become attached to your students—they are not yours. No matter what you do, students will come and go according to their destinies.

Maintain professional standards and strict confidentiality. Do not become romantically involved with a student, or have even a hint of sexuality in the relationship. Maintain the same standards as a doctor or counselor.

Also, remember that you are not a mountain-top ascetic. Kundalini Yoga is an exercise in group consciousness. You can go deeper into the whole idea behind Kundalini Yoga and help students to share the changes that yoga brings. Be encouraged to discuss the 3HO lifestyle. Assign innovative homework—such as saying nothing negative for a week, or trying a prosperity meditation for 40 days, or taping yourself for a day and listening to what you have spoken. Sing 3HO songs before or after class, dance to *bangara*\* rhythms. Give your students the touch of coziness and connection that brought you to this path.

\* *bangara* is a dance form popular in Northern India.