

# Transformation Through Bound Lotus

What began as a 40-day meditation quickly turned into an intense love-hate relationship that I'm sure will continue for the rest of my life

By Susan Jacobs

Feeling out of sorts recently, I decided to tackle a new meditation. My introduction to *Bound Lotus* follows, but for now, let me say that during my daily practice—which has been done in the bathtub, in airports, and in the seconds leading up to midnight so as not to skip a day—I cry, I scream, I curse, and occasionally I relax.

When I demonstrate Bound Lotus to loved ones, they think I'm insane for volunteering not only to contort myself into a pretzel, but to also then meditate like that. They've suggested I pursue therapy or mind-altering substances as an easier, faster path to *nirvana*.<sup>1</sup> It's always said with love and a smile, but some days as I cry in mental and physical pain during the meditation, it crosses my mind that perhaps there is another way. Fortunately, I know better and as I've now been practicing Bound Lotus daily since February 27, there's no turning back.

For weeks prior to beginning Bound Lotus, I tried different meditations, looking for relief for myself—usually stopping in the middle because I knew it wasn't the right one. Bound Lotus wouldn't leave my head though: I was possessed by it. Bound Lotus, Bound Lotus, Bound Lotus—it became my mantra and the only way out was to try it.

At the time, my laziness, fears, and avoidance were getting the best of me and I was creating too much drama in my life. I was driving loved ones crazy and didn't feel good about myself. My negative mind had a strong hold and I was on shaky ground. I didn't have a choice but to go for the most intense meditation available—one that is said to release karmic\* obstacles, negative tendencies, and emotions; clear and open all the chakras;\* strengthen the nervous and immune systems; and develop the state of *Shuniya*—the divine state of stillness, *Anand*, supreme bliss, *Samadhi*, awakened consciousness and more. Bound Lotus is considered one of the most difficult kriyas,\* and since it's also one of the shortest paths to healing deep emotional blockages, I'm counting on it to work its magic.

While struggling in Bound Lotus, I imagine Yogi Bhajan yelling at me, snapping me out of the entanglement of my ego. When I'm restless in the posture, I visualize being with



hundreds of other people in Bound Lotus. What Yogi Bhajan teaches is simple, obvious, and yet bloody difficult to live. Every day I wonder why it's so hard to commit to and remain true to my spirit.

My goal is to overcome ego and live gracefully. As always, Kundalini Yoga delivers exactly what I need, when I need it. Two years ago, I attended Mahan Kirn Kaur Khalsa's<sup>2</sup> Bound Lotus workshop at Kundalini Yoga East in New York. It wasn't clear what drew me there until the class began. In brief, here's her story: She developed a nervous system disorder that left her in excruciating pain. Doctors repeatedly said she'd lose her leg or be in a wheelchair for life. It was only Yogi Bhajan who

<sup>2</sup> Mahan Kirn Kaur was a member of Yogi Bhajan's staff for many years. She teaches Bound Lotus Kriya and has written a book about it, *Bound Lotus: An Instructional Manual*, available at [www.boundlotus.com](http://www.boundlotus.com).

<sup>1</sup> Liberation

said she could heal herself, and gave her Bound Lotus to do for thirty-one minutes a day. Fast-forward—she’s now fine and has been doing Bound Lotus since 2001.

Mahan Kirn is magical and inspiring, but the physicality of the experience is torturous. Bound Lotus is Full Lotus<sup>3</sup> with your arms wrapped behind your back holding the opposite foot, with your forehead on the ground. In the posture, mind and body merge into the realm of spirit where all healing is possible (I’m still waiting!). Since a teenager, my body has easily twisted into the Full Lotus position and almost enjoyed it, upright, that is. In the workshop, we practiced Bound Lotus for eleven minutes (switching legs midway). It felt like hours, yet when I came out of it, I felt clarity and peace that was divine.

When I decided to tackle Bound Lotus, it took months of stopping and starting. Throughout my calendar is written, “day one”, “day one”, “day one”. But once I finally got past the first week, the idea of starting over for skipping a day was unheard of. As I write this article I’m on day 141 of Bound Lotus! What started as a commitment to forty days became ninety, then 120, and now I’m aiming for 1,000 days. From there, perhaps it shall be for the rest of my life.



Physically, Bound Lotus remains challenging. Thirty-one minutes is my dream—I can only maintain it for twenty-two minutes, sometimes only eleven. For the shorter time, my forehead is on the ground. When it’s longer, it’s too intense so I prop my head up on a pillow. I use small rings on my feet, as I’m not yet flexible enough to grab my toes. Each day, I get closer and now only have an inch left to reach my toes. My hips are tight: “Feel the burn” is an understatement. At first, my feet and legs would fall asleep, but that stopped after several weeks.

Emotionally, it’s me, myself, and I, with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. It’s like holding a mirror one inch from my face—and that’s not a pretty sight! Generally I cry, sometimes sobbing, sometimes screaming. It’s not unusual to hear me bellowing, “This can’t be good for me! Stop being such a wimp! Don’t look at the clock!” or just a loud “aaaahhhhhh” echoing throughout the house. Lately, minutes before the end of the meditation, I experience a near panic attack, when I feel the most raw and vulnerable. When it’s over, I immediately become calm, with a great sense of balance, clarity, and gratitude.

<sup>3</sup> From Easy Pose, bring one foot up onto the opposite thigh. Then bring the other foot up onto the other thigh.

Mentally, Bound Lotus really gets me. Listening to the *Ray Man Shabad*<sup>4</sup> helps me control my mind. Without this shabad, my negative mind is on overdrive. The shabad dissolves my thoughts and for a moment I experience peace. Bound Lotus is, in part, about conquering the mind, and I’ll use any means necessary to achieve this.

Now, almost five months into this journey, I sleep deeper, have more energy, and life’s stresses bother me less. Bound Lotus is affecting me on many levels—from overcoming the physical struggle (which is ongoing), to having the courage to face the posture and myself each day despite the discomfort. Old emotional patterns and behavior are front and center, gaining speed and intensity. I know this too shall pass.

I’m grateful every day that my body does what I want and need it to. After getting through Bound Lotus there’s nothing I can’t face. I have a sense of accomplishment, yet can’t help feeling that after this long, I should be more grounded, more soulful. My teacher, Krishna Kaur, reminded me that meditations are tools, not cures. It’s about the heart and intention we bring to it. I’ve only focused on the accomplishment of getting through the meditation, and not

“When any posture is held over time, the Universe comes to support that person.” *Yogi Bhajan*

on developing a relationship with the Divine that’s within me. Krishna showed me that constant focus and prayer during meditation is crucial as a way to experience my soul/spirit. I now welcome the discomfort and use it to break through the levels of *maya*<sup>5</sup> and superficiality/ego in order to experience the complete joy and beauty of my relationship with myself.

The layers of Kundalini Yoga are deep—having a teacher helps tremendously. Krishna’s words and advice have transformed my Bound Lotus experience. I now sit with purpose and can release my mental and physical pain, leaving me with a deeper and more profound experience, for which I’m grateful.

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In addition to teaching Kundalini Yoga, **Susan Jacobs** is a Pilates instructor and Shiatsu massage therapist. She recently launched **Holistic Life Management**, which creates customized holistic healing programs for clients, and **Experience Health**, an innovative system of experiential corporate **Holistic Health Fairs**. She’s also a freelance writer and lives in **Brooklyn**. Contact her at [susanjacobs460@yahoo.com](mailto:susanjacobs460@yahoo.com)

\*See Glossary, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> This is the shabad (sound current) that is played during the practice of Bound Lotus.

<sup>5</sup> The illusion of the reality of sensory experience of one’s self and the world.