



*PranaShanti*  
Yoga Centre

PRANASHANTI YOGA CENTRE

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Kundalini Yoga 101 with Devinder Kaur

# **Beginner's Guide to Kundalini Yoga**



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## **Beginner's Guide to Kundalini Yoga**

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PranaShanti® Yoga Centre/PranaShanti® Inc.  
52 Armstrong Street, Ottawa, ON, Canada  
Phone 613.761.9642 (YOGA) • Fax 613.761.9644  
[www.pranashanti.com](http://www.pranashanti.com)

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*"Kundalini Yoga teaches you the techniques and awareness to stay healthy.  
You gain strong immune, glandular and nervous systems.  
This foundation gives you energy and lets you deal with the mental and  
spiritual facets of your life."*

—Yogi Bhanjan

## **Introduction**

Kundalini Yoga is one of the original and most powerful of the twenty-two schools of yoga. Kundalini Yoga is designed for the active person with responsibilities in school, work, family and the world.

Kundalini Yoga was maintained as a secret oral tradition for thousands of years which protected the techniques from being changed over time. 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. If you can practice at the same time each day, you will find that you will improve more rapidly. Try to take one to three yoga classes a week to establish a firm foundation for an effective program that fits your needs, goals, capacity and lifestyle. Wear loose exercise clothes to class, preferably of cotton or other natural fiber and if you wish, bring a yoga mat, bottle of water and a shawl or blanket.

## **Class Structure**

Each Kundalini Yoga class begins with "tuning in" with the mantra Ong Namoh Guru Dev Namoh. This mantra means "I bow to the divine wisdom, to the divine teacher within." "Tuning in" calms the mind to be open to guidance, and calls on the masters of Kundalini Yoga through the ages for protection and guidance during the yoga practice and sets the vibration for the class.

Before you "tune in," notice your state of mind and being. You can increase your self-awareness for observing effects you may experience from your Kundalini Yoga class by checking in with your breath, how your body feels and what you are thinking. It is possible to notice changes in your thoughts and in the way your body feels with just one Kundalini Yoga posture.

The structure of a Kundalini Yoga class is as follows:

- Opening Mantra
- Warm Up Exercises
- Kriya
- Deep Relaxation
- Meditation
- Closing Affirmation

## **Class Components**

The components of a class are:

- Pranayam – Breathing techniques
- Asana – Body postures

- Mudra – Hand positions
- Mantra – Sound currents
- Bhandas – Body locks

## **Pranayam**

Prana means life force or breath, yama is that which controls it. When you control your breath you control your life - like using the phrase "slow down and take a deep breath" to calm someone.

Our lungs are one of our largest bodily organs, but most people use only 1/10th of their lung capacity. During class, unless told otherwise, all breathing is done in and out through the nose. This stimulates the meridian points in the nasal cavity, filters the air and warms and humidifies it. Breath is central to the effects from Kundalini Yoga. There are three basic breaths to learn in the beginning.

### **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 (ASANA)

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.

### **Breath of Fire**

Breath of Fire is a balanced rapid breath pattern that cleanses the blood and releases old toxins from the lungs, mucous lining, blood vessels and cells. It is an energizing breath that helps to expand lung capacity and boost energy. Breath of Fire is a quick breath, equal on the inhale and exhale, powered from the navel point and solar plexus. The chest stays lifted and still, the movement is from the diaphragm muscle, and it sounds like "sniffing".

POSTURE (ASANA)

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

### **Sitali Pranayam**

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 (ASANA)

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

EXHALE

Exhale through the nose.

INHALE

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

## 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 teacher for assistance.

Some pointers for asana

1. Sit on a surface that's not too cold or too hard.
2. Use a sheepskin, yoga mat or blanket 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.
4. If you must eat before class only eat something light like a piece of fruit and avoid eating anything heavy two hours before class.
5. Take your socks off. Our feet have approximately 72,000 nerve endings in them. When we allow our feet to breathe we allow our nervous system the chance to connect with the energy surrounding us.
6. While pregnant or menstruating ask your teacher for a variation when the asana stimulates the navel center or calls for an inverted pose.

## 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.

<b>Name of Mudra</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Stimulates</b>	<b>Planet</b>
Gyan Mudra	Place the tip of the thumb together with the tip of the index finger.	Knowledge and ability.	Jupiter – representing expansion.
Shuni Mudra	Place the tip of the middle finger on the tip of the thumb.	Patience and discernment.	Saturn – the task master, the law of karma, the taking of responsibility and courage to hold to duty.
Surya or Ravi Mudra	Place the tip of the ring finger on the tip of the thumb.	Revitalizing energy, nervous system strength and good health.	Sun – energy, health and sexuality. Uranus – nervous system strength, intuition and change.
Buddhi Mudra	Place the tip of the little finger on the tip of the thumb.	Capacity to communicate clearly and intuitively and psychic development.	Mercury – quickness and mental powers of communication.
Venus Mudra	Place the palms facing each other. Interlace the fingers with the left little finger on the bottom.	The Mudra channels the sexual energy and promotes glandular balance. It also brings the	Venus – energy of sensuality and sexuality.

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<b>Name of Mudra</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Stimulates</b>	<b>Planet</b>
	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.	ability to focus or concentrate easily if you rest the Mudra in your lap while in a meditative posture.	

## Mantra

Mantra is the scientific use of sound to affect the consciousness. Next to breathing, 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 means "truth". Nam means "name or identity". "Live by your truth" or "Truth is your identity". Often used in a greeting or farewell, as you are acknowledging the divine truth within the other person.

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 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 Universe.

**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. The word can be broken down for its meaning: 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).

#### **Guru Guru Wahe Guru Guru Ram Das Guru**

This mantra vibrates and calls upon the humbleness and humility that Guru Ram Das represents. Guru Ram Das was a spiritual teacher in the 16th century who inspired and uplifted all who knew him. Chanting these words brings comfort to the soul, clarity to the mind, and miracles to the world.

#### **Sa Ta Na Ma**

"Infinity, Life, Death, Rebirth" Or "I am that balance between sun, moon, earth and ether that totality of infinity is Thou, I am Thou."

#### **Ra Ma Da Sa, Sa Say So Hung**

“Sun, Moon, Earth, Infinity; that which embraces everything, I am Thou." This mantra is very powerful for healing by balancing the elements.

#### **The Sunshine Song – Closing Affirmation**

Throughout the world, 3HO classes in Kundalini Yoga, as taught by Yogi Bhaijan, Master of Kundalini Yoga, use this “Sunshine Song” (Incredible String Band) to close each class. It is a grounding, uplifting and 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

Sat Nam

Sat Nam

## **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 Bhandha**

The most basic Bhandha is Jalandhara Bhandha, the Neck Lock. This Lock is practiced by contracting back on the neck and throat. The chin is drawn back and slightly tucked towards the chest. 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. 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 Bhandha**

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 Bhandha**

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 Bhandha 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 Bhandha**

This is the application of all three Locks at one time. When all the locks are applied, the nerves and glands are rejuvenated. It regulates blood pressure, reduces menstrual cramping and puts extra blood circulation into the lower glands: testes, ovaries, prostate, etc.

### **Resources**

1. Kundalini Research Institute: <http://kundaliniresearchinstitute.org/>
2. The Yogi Bhajan Library of Teachings - <http://libraryofteachings.com/>
3. 3HO: <http://www.3ho.org/>

### **About Your Teacher Devinder Kaur**

Director of *PranaShanti* Yoga Centre and Lead Trainer

[www.pranashanti.com](http://www.pranashanti.com) & [www.devinderkaur.ca](http://www.devinderkaur.ca)



Attend a Kundalini class with Devinder, and you'll experience why students have studied and practiced with her for well over a decade. She is a smart, experienced, and positive yoga teacher, who approaches the spiritual practice of Kundalini with humour and sensitivity. Her strong interpersonal approach to teaching helps people reach their individual goals and empower themselves through yoga. Chosen by the international Kundalini community, Devinder recently won the 2014 International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association's "Certificate of Teacher Recognition" for an outstanding reputation of teaching.

While talented and practiced, Devinder is also thoroughly accredited – she is a 500 Hour Yoga Alliance Registered Yoga Teacher in the Hatha and Kundalini Yoga traditions. She is an Ottawa Hatha Yoga Teacher Trainer and is recognized as the Kundalini Yoga Lead Trainer in the Ottawa region, as certified by the Kundalini Research Institute (KRI). Devinder is also honoured to serve as member of the Kundalini Research Institute (KRI) Board of Directors.

She is a registered member of Yoga Alliance, the International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Associations (IKYTA), the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT) and the Sound Healers Association. Devinder has studied with many top international trainers and continues to deepen and expand her knowledge by pursuing further education each year in Canada, the United States, and abroad.

In 2003, Devinder created PranaShanti (Prana means breath, Shanti means peace) as a web resource and free eNewsletter to share the benefits of Yoga. In 2008, as she saw that the Ottawa yoga community had grown considerably, she grew the concept into the PranaShanti Yoga Centre. PranaShanti is now recognized as the largest yoga training centre east of Toronto, and is a community where many teachers and students receive exceptional yoga education.

In 2007, Devinder released her debut CD – Echo – featuring a combination of relaxing gong and guided meditations. In 2014, Echo was followed up with two more meditation albums, Wave and Ease. Devinder’s abundant creative energy is also found in her writing, and she regularly writes yoga and health related articles for local and national magazines and websites. All of her work can be found on her website, [www.devinderkaur.ca](http://www.devinderkaur.ca)

Known to be an organized and detail-oriented yogi, business skills came naturally to Devinder. As a child, she played shop selling peaches and cherries from her Grandmother’s garden in British Columbia, where she grew up. Her work ethic flourished as a teenager, and she opened her first retail business at age 21 while earning degrees in Political Science and Business Administration from the University of Victoria.

Today, with over 25 years of experience as a self-employed business owner and business/IT consultant, she is a much requested presenter on television programs, at local and national Yoga and Women’s conferences, and travels extensively as a guest trainer for Hatha and Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training programs.

Devinder can be contacted by telephone at 613.761.9642 (YOGA) or by email at [devinder@pranashanti.com](mailto:devinder@pranashanti.com).