

# The Basics of Kundalini Yoga

By Alison Finney



*"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 Bhajan

Kundalini Yoga, also called the 'Yoga of Awareness', consists of simple yogic techniques that can be practiced by everyone. Positive effects can often be noticed right away. It keeps the body in shape and trains the mind to be strong and flexible in the face of stress and change. Oxygen capacity is increased along with blood flow to the glands, resulting in heightened awareness and vitality. Through breathing techniques and meditation, peace of mind can be obtained.

## In the Beginning

As a beginning student, participate at a pace that suits your flexibility and endurance. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. It is best to have bare feet to help stimulate the approximately 72,000 nerve endings in your feet. To gain maximum benefits, wait two to three hours after eating before you practice yoga and meditation. It will also be more comfortable to practice Kundalini Yoga on an empty stomach. If you need to eat, have something light, like a piece of fruit.

## "Tuning In"

Each Kundalini Yoga class begins with "tuning in" with the mantra ***Ong Namo Guru Dev Namo***. This mantra means "I bow to the Creator, 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.

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 exercise.

## Pranayama

***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 two basic breaths to learn in the beginning.

***Long deep breathing*** is your natural breathing mechanism. Inhale first by relaxing the belly outward, then filling the rib cage, finally filling the upper chest as the shoulders relax and drop back slightly. To exhale begin from the top, empty the chest, and then pull in the navel towards the spine to press out the last amount of breath. Long Deep Breathing builds endurance and patience.

***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".

## Mudras

**Mudra** means hand position or 'seal'. The ancient yogis knew that different areas of the hand were associated with parts of the body or brain. Each area of the hand also represents different emotions or behaviors. By bending, crossing, stretching or touching the fingers or finger tips in specific configurations you are communicating with the body and mind.

## Asanas

**Asana** means yoga posture. Kundalini Yoga is known as the yoga of angles and triangles. The use of angles in Kundalini Yoga postures, in combination with **pranayama**, **mantras**, and **mudras**, is one of main reasons that Kundalini Yoga works as quickly as it does. The angles put pressure on the glands to secrete. When a posture is released and the body is held still, the glandular secretions that have been stimulated have an opportunity to circulate freely. The result is a balanced glandular system that has a definite effect on your emotional stability through the chemistry of your body.

## Mantras

Mantras are sounds or words that control the mind. **Man** means mind. **Tra** is the wave or movement of the mind. Mantra is a wave, a repetition of sound and rhythm that directs or controls the mind. When you recite a mantra you have impact through its meaning, through its pattern of energy, through its rhythm, through its **naad** - its energetic shape in time, and through the meridian points it pressurizes in the mouth. When recited correctly, a mantra will activate areas of the nervous system and brain and allow you to shift your state and the perceptual vision or energetic ability associated with it. The following page lists examples and translations of some mantras frequently used during a class.

## Closing

Every Kundalini Yoga class finishes with the song "Long Time Sun." No matter where in the world you take a Kundalini Yoga class as taught by Yogi Bhanan you will hear this song. This song of blessing helps to ground you, integrate the benefits of the yoga and prepare you to resume the activities of everyday life.

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

## Frequently Used Kundalini Yoga Mantras

**ONG NAMO GURU DEV NAMO** - "I salute the creative power within; I salute the divine teacher within." This is the mantra we "tune in" with.

**SAT NAM** - 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.

**GURU GURU WAHE GURU GURU RAM DAS GURU** - This mantra vibrates the ecstasy of union with God and calls upon Guru Ram Das for guidance and protection. Guru Ram Das was a spiritual teacher in the 16th century who inspired and uplifted all who knew him. Chanting the name and praises of this saint 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.

**Alison Finney (Devinder Kaur)** is a certified Hatha and Kundalini Yoga Teacher in Ottawa, Ontario. She is registered with the Yoga Alliance and the International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association and is the founder of PranaShanti®, a health and yoga resource. For more information, visit [www.pranashanti.com](http://www.pranashanti.com) or call 613-841-4854.