

**KRI**

Translations are machine generated. If you can contribute to improve, please comment on the document.

[English](#) | [中文](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#) | [Deutsch](#) | [Italiano](#) | [Português](#) | [Русский](#)

KRI White Paper – Creating New Kriyas

2023

Introduction

There is a resurgence of interest in creating new Kundalini Yoga kriyas. This White Paper outlines the position of the Kundalini Research Institute on this topic.

Historical context

One of the justifications given today for creating new kriyas is that in the very early years in the West (approximately from 1969 to 1972), Yogi Bajan taught some of his students how to create kriyas.

This is not entirely true. One early student asked Yogi Bajan about how to do it. But it was generally accepted by the early 3HO teachers that this is what was done. There weren't manuals in those early days, and people were handing around notes from those classes, but it remained largely an oral tradition in the early years.

But firstly, the kinds of sequences that were being created at that time were very simplistic. They were a series of physical rhythmic movements (such as spinal flex, cat-cow, spinal twists, etc.) that were to be balanced and worked from the base of the spine up towards the top. Students were instructed to relax or meditate after each posture for an equal amount of time. Chanting and meditation followed the asanas. Classes began with the Adi Mantra and ended with the Longtime Sunshine Blessing, keeping both teacher and students safe, protected. Today, that kind of sequence would fall under the definition of a warm-up¹.

Anyone feeling a burning need to express their creativity by coming up with exercise sequences as per the original, early days instructions for creating kriyas, is welcome to make them into a warm-up sequence and then follow with a kriya from our tradition.

Secondly, it's worth exploring (though we don't know 100% for sure) WHY Yogi Bajan changed his stance about creating kriyas. Because he quickly shifted to a very strong stance AGAINST making up kriyas.

¹ "You may also choose 2 or 3 simple Kundalini Yoga exercises such as Spinal Flex, Cat-Cow, Spinal Twists, Standing Front Bends, Aquarian March, Life Nerve Stretches, all of which can stand alone. Keep it short! 10 minutes or so maximum, depending on the length of class. Do not create a whole other set. Focus on the kriya." - pg 291, The Aquarian Teacher, 6th edition.

At the summer 1996 IKYTA conference, he said, "It's very funny question I am asked, can't we little have a deviation from what is there and make our own thing? The beauty of a teacher and the duty of a teacher is not being himself and herself. Because the moment you become not yourself, the pure channel of energy you become between you and God, there is no difference at that moment. Then you know what the problem is, then it's not your problem then God has to come himself, to cover Himself because God is a teacher too. And He won't let him fall... Whenever you add your personality to it, you ruin yourself and ruin the other person on the spot."

Similarly, on 5 Oct 1999, Yogi Bhanan was speaking with the board of directors of IKYTA and said, "You know, it happened in Los Angeles, ... he changed the Kriyas. ... he made it up. Half of the class had a headache. People don't understand that it is very delicately and scientifically organized science. It is not just, we pull out of the earth. That's why we don't initiate students because we don't want with student any relationship except the student should glow and grow. We don't have a personality relationship with students."

These two quotes highlight the 2 reasons Yogi Bhanan gave for why not to make up new kriyas:

- The impact on the students (possibly less effective and/or harmful), and
- Keeping the teacher's ego out of the relationship with the students.

The Evolution of Yoga

Of course, over the thousands of years of yogic history, there have been a lot of changes and evolution. There does not seem to be any "pure" lineage of yoga practice, all the various spiritual traditions in India overlapped and influenced each other to various degrees. The teachings of Yogi Bhanan are not different. The philosophical underpinnings of our tradition have deep roots in Sikhism, tantra, hatha yoga, vedanta, and others. On the curriculum vitae that he wrote for himself, Yogi Bhanan lists 6 different teachers with whom he studied².

While we don't know for certain where Yogi Bhanan "got" most of the kriyas he taught, we surmise that:

- What he taught was unique, and vast (with thousands of different kriyas)
- Was probably drawn from multiple teachers/teachings/sources
- Was delivered in a way that was sensitive to the moment, working with the energies of the class at that time
- Had clear innovations (such as English language mantras such as God and Me, Me and God, Are One; Healthy am I, Happy am I, Holy am I; etc.)

How does the stance of not creating new kriyas align with the long history of yogic evolution, and with the apparent innovation of Yogi Bhanan?

² Sant Hazara Singh (Kundalini Yoga), Swami Devmurti (Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga), Acharya Marinder Dev (Hatha Yoga and Nervous System), Sant Ranjit Singh (Comparative Religions), Sivananda Ashram (Study of Vedanta Philosophy), and Dharendra Bhramachari (Yoga Therapy).

- 1) KRI is not against teachers drawing from multiple traditions. All teachers do this to some extent or another. We want to ensure that between tuning in with the Adi Mantra and closing with the Long Time Sunshine song, the kriya(s) that are practiced come just from this tradition. But as long as the other tradition(s) and practice(s) are not incongruous to our traditions and practices, there is no problem with a workshop or class that has Kundalini Yoga as just a part of it.
- 2) With thousands of kriyas to pull from, Kundalini Yoga teachers can be sensitive to the energies of a class without needing to make up anything new.
- 3) A teacher may have the sensitivity to innovate without ego, and it is not for KRI to judge that. But it is not KRI's role to validate or support this newly created kriya as a part of, or even consistent with, the teachings of Yogi Bhajan, which is the mission of KRI.

KRI's Mission

KRI is an organization whose mission is to steward this one, huge, tradition - the Teachings of Yogi Bhajan. KRI's mission is to preserve this body of knowledge, and to help as many people as possible with it.

KRI recognizes that people will still innovate and synthesize various teachings. But KRI's mission is to steward and share a vast repository of practices, literally thousands of kriyas, maintaining the integrity of their original transmission. Trying to design new kriyas without a deep understanding of all the various interconnected systems (nerves, glands, organs, nadis, vayus, chakras, tattvas, gunas, conscious, subconscious, and unconscious minds just to name a few) will most likely lead to practices that are not as impactful, and possibly harmful (will it be effective for people with different doshas, or different blends of energetic bodies for example).

And there is the risk that the desire to create new kriyas is coming more from the teacher's ego than their highest Self. KRI is not claiming that every teacher who is designing new kriyas is an egomaniac. But the sneaky nature of ego would certainly make anyone think that they are just serving in the best possible way, even if that may not necessarily be the case. Even if the impetus is not coming from ego, Kundalini Yoga teachers also need to be careful about involving their personality with the flow of energy between a teacher and a student.

For an individual to believe that they have access to a level of consciousness in which they are free from ego, not simply getting their own grandiose needs met; and through their own sensitivity able to modify a sequence so that all (in the class) are safely served is no small achievement. Because it is easier to believe that is true than for it to actually be true, and because KRI is deeply committed to the safety of all, trainers, teachers, and students; KRI has set that limit. Only Kriyas taught by Yogi Bhajan can be shared in KRI related events.

KRI totally supports presenting these teachings in new ways, adapting to new cultures and applying them in innovative settings. But it is not KRI's mission to create innovative new practices and kriyas

based on Yogi Bhajan's teachings. And even though we have the above two concerns, certainly people have been, and will continue to do so.

It may only be from far in the future that those innovations and innovators can be judged. Were those new kriyas safe and effective for everyone? Were all the numerous subtle levels and impacts to a Kundalini Yoga kriya balanced? There may be better ways for some people to connect with their highest Self and raise their awareness than Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan. There may be future practices, perhaps even based on Yogi Bhajan's kriyas, that are judged as better. KRI is not claiming that Yogi Bhajan's kriyas are perfect for everyone, or that they are the best there ever was or ever will be. But they are so effective, KRI sees no need to try to innovate, no motivation worth facing the risks already outlined. Which is why KRI's mission remains to promulgate the existing body of kriyas.

KRI is always trying to balance the immediate needs of today with a long term view towards maximizing our service to humanity (over the next 100+ years). So it is also important to look at what will happen 100 years from now. As people begin to modify the practices that Yogi Bhajan taught, there will be an evolution, a drift, that will move further and further away from the original set of teachings. There will be all kinds of variations and varieties. Some may work great, and others not so much. Some may flare up as very popular for a short time, fueled by a very charismatic teacher, only to become less popular as others try to continue it. 100 years from now, there will definitely be a vast ecosystem of many kinds of Kundalini Yoga. KRI is planning to still be around then, and still being the point of reference for the original set of teachings that Yogi Bhajan shared.

While we have concerns about the creation of new kriyas, it is not KRI's role to stop that experimentation and exploration. People have done it and will continue to. But we want to be clear that what we teach is the authentic, original set of teachings.

Why Create New Kriyas?

- *Yogi Bhajan probably made up most of the kriyas he taught, so why shouldn't we?*

The definition of kriya is a complete action. A kriya is not just a sequence of exercises that seem to work well together, or that systematically stretch each major part of the body. A kriya needs to stimulate and balance energies across multiple dimensions at once (physical, pranic, auric, mental, emotional, and spiritual). It would take a vast amount of knowledge AND an incredibly deep level of sensitivity to create something that is safe, effective AND stimulates the kundalini energy. Not that someone, someday, won't have those levels of sensitivity and knowledge, but it's not a common thing, or something someone could take a few classes in how to do.

Even if someone has the knowledge and sensitivity to create a new kriya (rather than just a pleasant sequence of moves), there is the risk of the teacher putting too much of their personality into the teaching space.

Wherever he got them from (prior teachers, the akashic records, his own intuition, etc.), Yogi Bhanjan shared a huge and unique body of practices. Whether we refer to them as “Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Yogi Bhanjan” or some other phrase, a teacher (and their students) have the karmic cover of not being the source, they can be the channel not the message itself. Once it becomes “Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Jane Doe” (again, in name or just in practice), the teacher would be taking the responsibility for that creation.

Making up a new kriya might be less effective and possibly harmful (at least to some students, even if it gives some a fantastic experience). And it has the risk (to both the teacher and the student) of the teacher’s ego and personality being too involved. With the thousands of kriyas available, even if you could, why would you want to?

- *We know a lot more about acupuncture, the relationship between the meridians and the western anatomy, neurology and psychology than anyone knew 50 years ago. So wouldn’t using modern knowledge lead to more effective kriyas?*

Maybe. But at least some of the Kundalini Yoga kriyas are more than just meridians and organs. There is also the chakras, the 10 bodies, the tattvas and gunas to think about. Are they all in balance as well? And really, what we’re trying to do is raise awareness, raise the Kundalini energy. Working with the pranas of the body is part of enabling that, but not our primary focus. Even if a master of acupuncture could help create a series of physical exercises that created an amazing improvement in the practitioners’ chi flow, would that help them get in touch with their soul any more than a great acupuncture session would?

People can, and will, explore all kinds of applications like this, modifying the Kundalini Yoga practices for specific purposes (like balancing chi in a certain way in this example). And perhaps some of the results of those explorations will be great new and powerful healing techniques. But it is not KRI’s mission to try to discover, test, or promote such applications. We have enough to do, stewarding and sharing the vast body of knowledge that we choose as our mission.

- *I’m creative, what’s wrong with expressing that creativity by combining various exercises?*

Please feel free to combine various simple exercises into a warm-up routine. And by all means, you should combine your sensitivity with your creativity to sense what your class needs and creatively pick from and possibly combine the existing kriyas. And definitely use your creativity to share inspiring, uplifting stories and philosophy and approaches to life that will resonate with your students. Speaking to their hearts can only be done if you are fully present at the moment and channeling all of your creative energy into reaching them in that way.

- *I’ve been teaching Kundalini Yoga for a very long time, and I’m sensitive, I can feel the energy of a class and what they need.*

Great! Certainly there exists a kriya from the vast library that Yogi Bhajan taught that would be perfect for what they need. Creating something new might not necessarily be what's best for all of them (with all of their different starting energy states), and runs the risk of you putting too much of your personality into the class. As a teacher, you are not there to entertain them with novelty. You can relax, teach even the same kriya over and over again, and allow it to work on each student as needed.

- *I've studied other forms of yoga (or meditation). There are some amazingly powerful practices from other traditions that I want to benefit from (and/or want my students to benefit from). What's wrong with that?*

Nothing at all! All we ask is that 1) between tuning in with the Adi Mantra, and closing with The Longtime Sunshine song you keep the practices to just Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan, and 2) that whatever practices you do before or after are not incongruous to our set of teachings (so not practicing the use of entheogens³ after a Kundalini Yoga kriya for example).

- *I've been practicing (or teaching) the same small set of kriyas for decades. I'm bored with them. What's wrong with a little variety?*

Nothing is wrong with variety. Take a Hatha yoga class if you want to move your body in some new and different ways. Why not? But remember that you can also approach your desire for novelty as just another mental state that you can consciously work with. What is underneath your boredom (which is the 2nd stage of the 21 stages of meditation)? Can you locate your Self in the midst of whatever feeling your mind is having (including boredom)?

Each time we practice a kriya, we are coming into it as a different person than the last time we practiced it. We are at a different place in our long-term lifecycles, and also our short-term biorhythms will be different. Our state of mind will be different today than it was yesterday as well. Boredom can be an invitation to turn even more inwards to really sense the uniqueness of this present moment. Yes, of course, it is totally human to feel bored with the same practice every day. But we also know that we don't practice keeping our mind happy, we practice having the opportunity to encounter our own mind. And through a wide variety of such encounters, we attempt to locate our true self, which is beyond our mind.

So use the thousands of kriyas within our tradition. And explore other traditions if you feel so called. And allow yourself to explore a deeper level of yourself when confronted with boredom.

- *I am trained as a hatha yoga teacher as well as a Kundalini Yoga teacher. Are you saying that I cannot make up a hatha flow class, which is done as per that tradition?*

³ A chemical substance, typically of plant origin, that is ingested to produce a non-ordinary state of consciousness for religious or spiritual purposes.

No, that is not what KRI is saying! You can feel free to make up a hatha yoga flow class. You could even do that before a Kundalini Yoga kriya and/or meditation. So you could do the hatha flow, then tune in with the Adi Mantra and close the Kundalini Yoga portion with The Longtime Sunshine song.

KRI would not support someone drawing inspiration from kriyas that Yogi Bhajan taught to make a new sequence of exercises, and simply practicing it outside the Adi Mantra-Long Time Sunshine Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Yogi Bhajan window. Even if they clearly stated that “now we are practicing a sequence that I made up...and now we are going to tune in and practice a meditation exactly as Yogi Bhajan taught it...”

Clearly there could be any number of variations on this kind of example, and some judgment calls will have to be made by KRI as needed.

The Beauty and Subtlety of Kundalini Yoga

The kriyas in our tradition are amazingly powerful. Anyone of any background or faith can practice them and be benefited. They will help make practitioners healthier, happier, and holier (more connected to their own Soul). And a big part of how they do that so effectively are the specifics of the practices, the angle of the held arms working on a meridian, the particular breath rhythm of a pranayama impacting a certain facet of the mind, etc. But there is also an even more subtle aspect to the practice of Kundalini Yoga. There is an energetic link between the teacher and the student. There is some spark of consciousness that is there to be caught.

This subtle energy is what Kundalini Yoga teachers tap into when they tune in with the Adi Mantra. And that connection to the Golden Chain is the real ‘magic’ within every posture and every movement, the invitation to the student’s soul to blossom.

And so again the question is why the need to try to innovate by making up new kriyas? Each teacher innovates by being authentically and fully themselves when they teach a class. And we can benefit the student the most, we can serve their soul the best, when we put our personality aside (as in the Teacher’s Oath⁴), tap into the Golden Chain, and open an impersonal space for the students to flourish in.

You can also see the emphasis we Kundalini Yogis place on the subtle energy of a class, over the specifics of the physical practice, in our approach to precision, resting, and modifications. We teach that a majority of the benefits of a Kundalini Yoga class happen just by showing up! Even if you can’t physically do ANY of the poses, and just sit (or lie) and breathe, you will get the majority of the benefits of the class. Yes, the physical dimension is connected to, and enhances the subtle dimensions, but perfecting the physical side is only a small percentage of the total impact!

⁴ I am not a woman, I am not a man, I am not a person, I am not myself; I am a Teacher.

So there can be an over-emphasis on the physical dimension of yoga in the desire to create new kriyas. Why not just relax and let the subtle and group energy carry all the practitioners to whatever experience they need?

KRI's relationship with devoted practitioners who create their own kriyas

The current KRI Code of Ethics includes a Scope of Practice that says, in part, "A Teacher teaches kriyas as they were taught, with the exceptions of proportionally reducing the timing of postures, providing variations of postures when necessary to accommodate physical limitations of students, or adding relaxations as needed." KRI takes this to mean that KRI certified Kundalini Yoga teachers will not make up their own kriyas.

This does not mean that KRI views such teachers as bad or wrong. But such practices are not in alignment with KRI's identity. Therefore, a teacher cannot be a teacher trainer in the Aquarian Trainer Academy if they are teaching 'Kundalini Yoga' kriyas that were not taught by Yogi Bhajan. KRI would attempt to be in dialogue with any teacher known to be not following this portion of the Scope of Practice. If necessary, a formal complaint to the Office of Ethics and Professional Standards may be filed to investigate and uphold the Code of Ethics. All teachers at events hosted by affiliated organizations (3HO, 3HO Europe, IKYTA, various national Kundalini Yoga Teacher Associations, etc.) are expected to be KRI-certified teachers in good standing and that any Kundalini Yoga kriyas that they teach to be only "as taught by Yogi Bhajan."

Conclusion

KRI has concerns about making up new kriyas, concerns that the results may be potentially harmful to students, or at least not as beneficial; and concerns that doing so puts too much of the teacher's personality into the class.

KRI also acknowledges that those issues can be overcome, that some teacher(s) somewhere and some day will have the breadth of knowledge and the sensitivity to make powerful, safe new kriyas. But it is not KRI's goal or mission to be involved in the creation, evaluation, or promulgation of such innovations. KRI's service to the world is in stewarding and sharing the huge body of teachings that Yogi Bhajan shared, including thousands of kriyas (both physical and meditative kriyas).

Some Definitions

Kriya

From the Aquarian Teacher textbook, 6th edition, "The word kriya means action. But kriya is not just any action. It is an action that leads to a complete manifestation, that lets a seed come to bloom, a thought come into actuality, a desire become a commitment. In yoga practice, a kriya is a sequence

of postures, breath, and sound that are integrated together to allow the manifestation of a particular state. When you do a kundalini kriya, the result of its repetition is the access to, and mastery of a particular, predictable, and stable state – a facet of your awareness.”

In practical terms, KRI would classify any yoga practice that Yogi Bhajan taught in a single class as a kriya (of course, except for any instances where he may have explicitly said that he was sharing more than one kriya). The names given to most of the sets, kriyas, and meditations in KRI manuals came from students and book editors, not directly from Yogi Bhajan. Where he gave a name to a kriya, that is what is used, but in most of his classes, he never named the practice that he was sharing. Those were added after the fact by someone else. So even if something was named, “Basic Spinal Energy Series,” or “The Masters Touch Meditation” KRI still views them as kriyas

Similarly, if Yogi Bhajan taught a single yogic practice in a class (usually meditative, but could be quite physically challenging!), KRI considers that to be a complete action to create a certain energetic state, and therefore is a kriya.

Chanting

Anyone could take any of the mantras we use in Kundalini Yoga, or any gurbani kirtan shabad, and simply sit (with the hands folded in the lap, at the knees or with a simple mudra like gyan mudra or prayer pose) and chant or sing. This kind of practice would NOT be considered a kriya, but is still a part of “Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Yogi Bhajan,” and would be perfectly appropriate to creatively combine with a kriya (or kriyas) in a Kundalini Yoga class.

Some practices that are NOT kriyas but can be creatively woven into Kundalini Yoga classes or workshops

There were a lot of things that Yogi Bhajan taught that are not kriyas, such as Breathwalk, gatka, celestial communications, and physical training sequences. These can be combined with kriyas (of course with care to create a safe experience and a positive energetic flow) in Kundalini Yoga classes and workshops.