

***How did you discover Kundalini and what about it spoke to you?***

I moved to Chicago after high school to go to college, and I had the opportunity to experiment with many styles of yoga. I loved them all, but I felt like I was searching for something and I really hadn't found a yoga that completed me. At the library I stumbled across a book on Kundalini Yoga, *Eight Human Talents* by Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa and everything it said was every part of my current practice that I felt was missing. There happened to be a Kundalini studio five blocks from my school. From the first class, I fell in love; I knew it was right. I started teacher training a month later.

***You are listed as both Chelsea Schwarz and Meherbani Kaur on the Heartland site. Can you tell us about your names?***

In Kundalini Yoga, everyone receives a spiritual name, which is your "pran sutra" or the sound that was made the moment you were created; it is to remind you of your destiny. My spiritual name is Meherbani Kaur, which means, "Divine princess who walks with grace and courage and speaks words of wisdom with mercy and compassion." So when someone calls me by my spiritual name, it is reminding me of that destiny. My destiny is to teach, so it is very important to me for my students to call me by my spiritual name because they are helping me reach that destiny.

***How has practicing Kundalini impacted you?***

It has completely transformed me for the better. It couldn't have found me at a better time. I was going through a lot transitioning from teenager into adulthood, and I felt like I was losing who I was. Kundalini Yoga grounded me and helped me find the original me.

The practice of Kundalini Yoga also greatly influenced my performance through college. My grades were low when I started teacher training, and I couldn't seem to focus or find the right creative flow to do my work. Within the year of teacher training I went from a "C" average to an "A" average and ended up graduating with a 3.5. Professors noticed my transition and couldn't believe the results in my work. I started receiving opportunities I would of never had been offered before.

***Can you tell us about your clothing, including the turban?***

I am a fashion designer and one of my lines, [KAUR](#), is an organic yoga lifestyle line. I wear it when I teach and try out new pieces that I eventually sell to boutiques and yoga studios nationwide. As for the turban, Kundalini Yoga teachers cover their head to protect the 7<sup>th</sup> chakra or energy center at the crown of the head. By covering your head in the cold you trap the heat from escaping out of your head – this is a similar concept. Many Kundalini yogis choose to wear turbans in particular because they give a natural cranial adjustment and keep the energy up.

***Can you give a short explanation of a Kriya?***

A "Kriya" is an orchestrated pattern of movements, breath, mantras, and mudras that guide the energies of the body and the mind to a specific result. The results of kriyas can be mental balance, a boosted immune system, prosperity, release of anger, etc

In Sadhana, or daily practice, we have an opportunity to grow and break old habits. Kundalini yogis have a consistent daily sadhana based on Kriyas. There are specific periods of time required to break old habits and develop new ones. A person chooses a specific kriya or meditation to affect a desired change and then practices that for a specific number

of days: 40 days to change a habit, 90 days to confirm a habit, 120 to make the new habit who you are, and 1000 days to master the new habit.

**Shat is the relationship between Kundalini and Sikhism?**

Kundalini Yoga has existed since 800 BC and Sikhism was not developed until the fifteenth century. Guru Ram Das (October 1534 – 1 September 1581), 4th of the Sikh Gurus, also happened to be a master of Kundalini Yoga. This was the point in time where some of the Sikh mantras began being used in Kundalini Yoga. Some of them are still used today and that is where they have their origin, although no one needs to be a Sikh to practice Kundalini Yoga and not all Sikhs practice Kundalini. Yogi Bhajan who brought Kundalini Yoga to the west was also the Siri Singh Sahib, or the Sikh leader in the Western Hemisphere. When he introduced Kundalini Yoga, many of his students were interested in Sikhism as well.