

# **An Exploration of the Yogic Origins of Humanology Practices in Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Yogi Bhajan**

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the potential connections between Yogic practices and the collective practices that are known as Humanology in Kundalini Yoga as Taught by Yogi Bhajan (KYATBYB). Through research funding granted to The Master of Arts in Yoga Studies program at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles, California, the Kundalini Research Institute (KRI), an organization dedicated to maintaining and teaching the practices of KYATBYB, has requested this exploration. The author is not a KYATBYB practitioner and is not affiliated with KRI, the 3HO community, or Yogi Bhajan. This paper is not arguing for or against the efficacy of these practices; it is simply an investigation into their origins. While similarity and correlation of ancient practices in no way prove direct connections between them and KYATBYB, this paper is an attempt to elucidate the origins of some of KYATBYB's Humanology practices, which have possibly emerged from Yoga, Sikh, and Ayurvedic teachings or are of unknown, or of yet-to-be-discovered, origins.

## **Humanology**

The foundational manual for KYATBYB, *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga (The Aquarian Teacher)*, draws upon spiritual, scientific, and psychological notions as well as the ancient language of Sanskrit to offer an understanding of the practices collectively called Humanology:

The applied science and psychology of the human psyche for fulfillment of the human potential in body, mind, and spirit. Hu means “ray” or “the radiance;” [sic] man means “the mind.” Hu-man means the radiance of the mind. Humanology presents practical lifestyle guidelines for the full spectrum of human energies and capacities: physical, mental [sic] and spiritual. One could say that Humanology is “applied Kundalini Yoga.”<sup>1</sup>

To that end, KYATBYB offers a number of ways of living and presenting in the world that are meant to enhance the spiritual experience and fitness of the practitioner, including body care and dress, Yogic diet, conscious communication, and teachings for women and men.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 236.

## Body Care and Dress

KYATBYB recommends body-care and dress practices that can assist the practitioner along the spiritual path.

### *Wearing White Clothing to Increase One's Aura*

In KYATBYB, practitioners are encouraged to wear white clothing in an effort to increase their respective auras. In the Kundalini Yoga newsletter, "Beads of Truth," an aura is defined as a subtle "glow from around [the] head and other body parts."<sup>2</sup>

Concepts around the color white and auric radiance can be found in ancient texts, and their modern interpretations have been explored by Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein, who wrote:

Mysticism is universally associated with experiences of light, even more than with sound. In fact, the transcendental Reality is frequently described as utter brilliance and as such is compared to the sun, or is called the sun beyond the sun. Liberation also is widely referred to as enlightenment or illumination.<sup>3</sup>

Feuerstein further explains this concept as illustrated in the anthology of spiritual experiences by J. M. Cohen, *The Common Experience*:

"The enlightened are bathed in light. Likewise they irradiate light, which is represented by the aura that surrounds the heads of saints and *bodhisattvas* in Christian and Buddhist art. There is a subtle form of light that strikes the inward eye and suffuses the body. Enlightenment is no metaphorical term."<sup>4</sup>

While the term, "aura," is often attributed to Theosophy, a religion that emerged in the late 1800s and blends Christian and Indian esoteric traditions, allusion to this brilliant light is

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<sup>2</sup> *Beads of Truth*, No.22, Spring 1974, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 320.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

found far earlier, in *The Bhagavad Gita*, a text that may have been written between 400 BCE and 200 CE, when Arjuna beholds Lord Krishna in the latter’s fearsome form:

With infinite power, without/beginning, middle, or end,/With innumerable arms,  
the moon and/sun being Your eyes,/I see You, the blazing fire Your  
mouth,/Burning all this universe with Your radiance. (BG XI.19)<sup>5</sup>

The practice of wearing white is found in an array of ancient Yogic texts. According to Vedic texts, the color white signifies spiritual purity. For instance, in the *Shiva Samhita*—a text that scholars believe may have been written sometime between 1300 CE and the 1600s CE—white is associated with the Ajna chakra, the energy center at the point between the eyebrows, and with a paramahamsa, “an ascetic of the highest order”<sup>6</sup>:

The Ajna lotus is between the eyebrows. It contains the syllables *ham* and *ksha* and has two petals. . . . A syllabic seed is found there which looks like the autumn moon. The man who knows it is a paramahamsa and never perishes. . . . This same great light is discussed in all the tantras. By contemplating it, the yogi [sic] is sure to attain the same perfection.<sup>7</sup>

Chapter six of *The Gheranda Samhita (GS)*, considered to have emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE, describes types of dhyana, or “[m]editative absorption.”<sup>8</sup> “Gross is of an image and luminous is of light,”<sup>9</sup> the text states. And, later, the *GS* goes on to explain how the practitioner should envision one’s guru during their meditation:

He should visualize his guru there as a god with two arms and three eyes,  
dressed in white, bedaubed with white-scented paste, wearing a garland of

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<sup>5</sup> Chapple & Sargeant, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, 471.

<sup>6</sup> Wisdomlib.org, “Paramahamsa.”

<sup>7</sup> Mallinson, *The Shiva Samhita: A Critical Edition and An English Translation*, V.128, 129.

<sup>8</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 455.

<sup>9</sup> Mallinson, *The Gheranda Samhita: The Original Sanskrit and An English Translation*, VI.1.

white flowers, and in the company of his crimson Shakti. By dhyana of the guru like this, the gross dhyana is perfected.<sup>10</sup>

According to Feuerstein, “Târaka Yoga avails itself of the higher vibrations of both white and colored light. . . . The word *târaka* means literally ‘that which crosses’ or ‘deliverer.’ It denotes the ultimate Reality, which is the true liberating agency.”<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not such philosophy has influenced the KYATBYB practice of wearing white, the concept that color, particularly white, is believed to have an impact on both the practitioner and the observer has indeed been explored in many different ways in Yoga, prior to KYATBYB’s advent.

The practice of wearing white clothing among spiritual seekers is common in India. Wearing white clothing makes a statement about the wearer, symbolizing purity, as in the case of the Jain Svetambara, ascetics who wear white robes, a point noted by Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa-Baker, a member of the Theological Studies faculty at LMU. The wearer of white signifies that they are observing a life of renunciation of the material world, or, in Sikh practices, that they are renouncing the ego—as is the case for Sikh Sant lineages who wear white, including Sikh ragi musicians; 3HO-Sikh Dharma, the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization, founded in Los Angeles, California; and the Sikh communities, Namdhari and Nanaksar. White is also the color worn at death. Those who wear white represent the ego-death of a Jivan-Mukti, one who has liberated themselves from their ego while alive.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mallinson, *The Gheranda Samhita: The Original Sanskrit and An English Translation*, VI.14.

<sup>11</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 320.

<sup>12</sup> Khalsa-Baker, Electronic Correspondence, 2021.

According to Ayurvedic physician, Dr. Suhas G. Kshirsagar, Director of Ayurvedic Healing; Chopra Global Faculty Member/Advisor; and author of the best-selling books, *The Hot Belly Diet* and *Change Your Schedule Change Your Life*, by contrast, wearing colorful clothing signifies that one is engaged in the indulgence of the material world and the associated state of mind. White is the color of purity and considered sattvic, of luminous quality, or guna. It is the opposite of the guna, tamas, which is of heavy and dark quality. By wearing white, the practitioner moves away from tamas, using the purifying color of white to uplift the mind, sending a clear message to everyone the practitioner encounters that they are not interested in the play of the material world.<sup>13</sup>

Practitioners additionally carry this message forward as a form of self-protection. White is the unity of all colors. It represents with wisdom goddess, Saraswati, and is also related to the swan, an ancient symbol of purity's arising from dirt—even though the swan swims in dirty water, its coat remains pure, white, and clean.<sup>14</sup> Though the practitioner walks through the “dirty water” of the material world, like the swan, their “coat” retains its purity.

According to Ayurveda, India's 5,000-year-old science of healing—which, it should be noted, does not specifically mention Kundalini Yoga in any of its texts<sup>15</sup>—experiencing particular colors can help balance one's dosha, a term often translated as “imbalance.” There are three doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, which comprise a combination of the five elements. Vata is space and air. Pitta is fire and water, and Kapha is water and earth. These elemental

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<sup>13</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

combinations affect how we engage with the world. Those with a Vata dosha, or imbalance, often need to feel grounded due to their “airy” nature. Pitta may need to tamp down its fire, while Kapha may require invigorating surroundings to move past the heaviness of the earth-and-water combination. Therefore, each dosha can be shifted by the colors that surround it. Vata can find balance with warm earth and pastel tones, and Pitta benefits from soothing hues. To invigorate Kapha, vibrant colors are recommended. Knowing how easily colors can affect the human mind, we can understand that wearing certain colors also has a subtle effect. Therefore, the Ayurvedic understanding that colors can influence the human experience can be applied to the concept of wearing white—a symbol of luminosity, purity, and sattva. This understanding can also explain the profound effect color can have on how we perceive our own auras, “[t]he color effects [sic] which the ‘spiritual eye’ can perceive raying out round the physical man and enveloping him like a cloud,”<sup>16</sup> and how others perceive our auras as well.

More modern interpretations regarding the wearing of white exist. For example, Roger Gabriel (Raghavanand), Chief Meditation Officer for Chopra Global, notes dark colors absorb light, while light colors are more reflective. Therefore, light colors, especially white, allow one’s “light” to reflect, shine through, and become more apparent to the observer.<sup>17</sup> This approach to Yoga, from a scientific standpoint, has become appealing to many modern scholars and practitioners, as more contemporary audiences often look to science to help frame an understanding of more abstract and esoteric concepts.

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<sup>16</sup> Steiner, *Theosophy*, 181.

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel, Interview, January 13, 2021.

Feuerstein, when writing of the human experiences with “Clear Light,”<sup>18</sup> a term that pertains to an individual’s preparation for death from “the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*—the *Bardo Thödol*,”<sup>19</sup> notes:

Experiences of inner light occur well before the *yogin* [sic] has reached the point of spiritual maturity where the encounter with the transcendental Light takes place. . . . These experiences, known as photisms, can be looked upon as dress rehearsals for the great experience of the Light of lights.<sup>20</sup>

Feuerstein’s point underscores that wearing white clothing, an outward display of potential inner light, does not necessarily confirm that one is an enlightened being nor able to guide others on that path. Indeed, *The Dattatreya Yogashastra*, a text from roughly the 13<sup>th</sup> century, cautions, “The wearing of religious garb does not bring success, nor does talking about it. Practice alone is the cause of success: this is indeed true.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 320.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Mallinson and Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, 61.



## *Uncut Hair*

For those who practice KYATBYB, it is suggested that their hair remain uncut, as explained in *The Aquarian Teacher*:

[H]air was the first technique to raise the kundalini energy. When the hair is at its natural full length and coiled over the anterior fontanel for males or the posterior fontanel for females, it draws pranic energy into the spine. The force of this downward energy causes the Kundalini energy to rise for balance. This is why it is common to find grace and calmness in a person with uncut hair from birth if they have kept it well. Actually the hair was so important that the word for consciousness, kundalini, actually derives from the word *kundal* which means “a coil of the hair of the beloved.”<sup>22</sup>

In “Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions,” author Patrick Olivelle examines the important role hair plays within broader Indian society:

In India symbolic manipulations of hair appear as variations of three central themes: (1) the groomed control of hair, (2) shaving the hair of the head (in the case of adult males this involves also the shaving of the beard), and (3) the neglect of hair resulting in either loose unkempt hair or dirty matted hair, often accompanied by the neglect of nails, and, in the case of males, of the beard. Without denying the possibility of personal meanings. . . all these types of hair manipulation, I hope to show, communicate deeply social meanings, placing the individual whose hair is so manipulated in different relationships both to the broader society and to the segment of that society to which that individual belongs.<sup>23</sup>

Given that KYATBYB has many of its roots in the Sikh traditions that have emerged from India, the focus on hair in the practice may, too, have arisen from the Sikh teachings:

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<sup>22</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 186.

<sup>23</sup> Olivelle (author), “Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions,” Hildebeitel & Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, 13, 15.

Gobind Singh (1666-1708 C.E.), the last of the original line of ten *gurus*, transformed the Sikh community into an efficient military brotherhood (*khalsa*) trained to defend its faith and cultural/political integrity against the Muslims. He outlawed the caste system and required that his followers adopt the surname Singh (Sanskrit: *simha*, “lion”) and, if male, demonstrate their allegiance by wearing the “Five K’s” (*panc-kakâr*, Sanskrit: *panca-kakâra*): long hair (*kesh*, Sanskrit: *kesha*), a comb (*kangha*), a steel bracelet (*kara*), a dagger (*kirpan*), and short pants (*kaccha*).<sup>24</sup>

The reasons vary as to why uncut hair is an important and highly visible symbol and practice of Sikhism. One explanation is that hair denotes “holiness and strength. One’s hair is part of God’s creation. Keeping hair uncut indicates that one is willing to accept God’s gift as God intended it.”<sup>25</sup> Other reasons, such as a commitment to living simply, moving beyond the focus on the physical body, and seeking to evolve spiritually have been postulated as to why this practice exists.<sup>26</sup> Khalsa, or baptized Sikh men, are not allowed to shave nor trim their beards, and Amritdhari, baptized Sikh women, many not shave nor cut any body hair. Olivelle further elaborates the ways in which Sikh identity markers uphold the ideal of the Sant-Sipahi, or Saint-Warrior, dedicated to spiritual and social well-being:

[T]he Sikh male. . . is not permitted to cut any of his hair—head hair or beard—from birth until death. An adult Sikh male is distinguished by his long hair and beard. He is, however, married and part of the social fabric. To understand the hair symbolism of Sikh males we have to locate it within the historical context—North India between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century—that gave birth to the Sikh tradition. Coming from the background of devotional religion (*bhakti*) and saints (*sant*) of northern India, the early Sikh gurus deliberately drew a contrast between the Sikh bodily symbols and those of both the traditional Hindu renouncer with his shaven head and the Moslem [sic] with his circumcised penis. The Sikh holy man, by contrast, has long hair, is married, and is uncircumcised. There is a structural inversion between Hindu renouncers and Sikhs. The Sikh householder, the representative of a new form of holiness, stands, in structural opposition to two Hindu institutions: the ordinary

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<sup>24</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 334.

<sup>25</sup> Bbc.co.uk, “Religions - Sikhism: The Five Ks.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

householder because the Sikh is a holy man, and the renouncer because the Sikh affirms holiness within marriage and society. This dual opposition is symbolized on the one hand by the Sikh long hair and on the other by the turban that encloses and controls the hair and by the well-groomed and waxed beard. An interesting historical point is that the Sikh long hair is itself a symbol borrowed from another and by then obsolete form of separation from society, the uncut hair and beard of the forest hermit. Yet, as part of the social fabric, the uncut hair of the Sikh is not neglected; it is washed, oiled, combed, and enclosed within a turban—a traditional way of hair control in India. As Uberoi (1967:96) has pointed out, the symbolism of the five *k's* [sic] expresses power and its control. The comb controls the power of the hair, the steel bangle controls the power of the sword, and the underwear (*kach*) the power of the uncircumcised penis.<sup>27</sup>

Olivelle's reference above to the "forest hermit" spotlights the contrast between the controlled uncut hair of the Sikh tradition and the uncontrolled hair of an individual separated from society:

[W]e have a unique manipulation of hair by refusing to manipulate it at all—that is, the utter neglect of hair. The most common instance of neglected hair is the so-called matted hair (*jata*) associated with forest hermits . . . . At least in its early history, neglected and matted hair symbolized ideally and typically an individual's physical separation from society and civilized living, even though there are instances when the *jata* is recommended for other individuals separated from social living but not necessarily from social geography, such as vedic [sic] students. . . . To understand the symbolism of matted hair it is necessary to locate it within the larger grammar of the symbols associated with physical withdrawal from society in ancient India. Besides long and matted hair, bodily symbols of forest living included a long and uncut beard in the case of males, long and uncut nails, eating only uncultivated forest produce, clothes of tree bark or animal skin, and frequently also bodily uncleanliness. . . . People with matted hair are required to live in the forest or wilderness.<sup>28</sup>

Olivelle also refers to "vedic [sic] students," who also experience a separation from society, but when doing so, undergo ritualistic shaving, rather than adapting to the wildness of forest environments:

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<sup>27</sup> Olivelle (author), "Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions," Hildebeitel & Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, 26-7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

Clearly the most common and possibly the most significant manipulation of hair in South Asian societies is the shaving of the head. . . . It occurs so frequently in ritual settings that space does not permit me to fully explore individual instances. . . . When a young boy undergoes vedic [sic] initiation (*upanayana*), when a sacrificer is consecrated (*diksa*) prior to his performing a vedic [sic] sacrifice, when a king is anointed (*abhiseka*)—at all these initiatory rites the subject is first shaved. Indeed, these ceremonies are presented as new births of the individuals.<sup>29</sup>

Olivelle explains that other instances in South Asian traditions in which an individual experiences shaving are a child's first haircut, a shaving ritual accompanied by a mantra for long life and a burial of the cut hair for fertility, and then the shaving of the first beard, accompanied by a head shaving, at around 16, a time of sexual maturity. As part of a person's funeral, the individual's head, and potentially entire body, is shaved prior to cremation.<sup>30</sup>

In Sikhi, hair is viewed as a sign of spiritual strength and commitment. P. Hershman in the essay, "Hair, Sex and Dirt," writes:

Whatever the religious symbolism in the mind of Guru Gobend [sic] Singh when he chose these five symbols, it certainly does not follow that the same symbolism is necessarily subconsciously accepted by every present day Sikh who wears the five symbols. . . . At the level of overt religious symbolism Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, exhorted his followers to be men of god and yet to remain within the world, thus is their hair uncut, but combed and tied. The symbolism of the knotted uncut hair along with the comb is that all Sikhs possess spiritual power but must continue their mundane lives, i.e. spirituality is kept in check by the temporal. At the individual subconscious level the symbolism appears to be that of sexual strength which is kept under control.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Olivelle (author), "Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions," Hildebeitel & Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, 17-8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Hershman, "Hair, Sex and Dirt," 280.

And, while there are strong similarities between the hair practices of Sikhism and KYATBYB, perhaps due to Yogi Bhajan's Sikh background, these commonalities do not offer indisputable confirmation that the KYATBYB practice of uncut hair is solely a result of Sikh influence.

### *Tying the Hair in a Rishi Knot*

Tying one's hair in a knot at the top of the head, known as the shikha or Rishi knot, is a common practice in India, particularly among Brahmin<sup>32</sup>, the highest societal caste, from which Hindu priests emerge. The Sanskrit term, shikha, means "tuft of hair"<sup>33</sup> and "flame,"<sup>34</sup> and Rishi, can be translated as "sage."<sup>35</sup> Hindu priests are widely regarded as teachers of ancient wisdom.

*The Aquarian Teacher* addresses this practice of tying the hair in a topknot, which for Sikhs is called a Joorā and worn under a turban:

Yogis and Sikhs often do not cut their hair, and coil or knot it on top of the head on their solar center. In males the solar center is on top of the head at the front (anterior fontanel). Females have two solar centers: one is at the center of the crown chakra, the other is on top of the head towards the back (posterior fontanel). Coiling or knotting the hair at the solar centers and covering it with a natural fabric cloth helps in the management of the Kundalini energy.<sup>36</sup>

Gabriel, Chief Meditation Officer for Chopra Global, agrees that the practice of tying the hair in a Rishi knot is that it protects the bindu, or crown, chakra at the top-back of the head, where the soul is believed to leave the body at the end of a person's life. He adds that tying the hair in this way also puts pressure on the head and aids in concentration.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Deshpande, *Saṃskṛtasubodhinī: A Sanskrit Primer*, 447.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Wisdomlib.org, "Rishi."

<sup>36</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 53-4.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel, Interview, January 13, 2021.

The Rishi-knot practice can also be interpreted as acknowledging the sensitivity near the fontanel, the crown of the head, which requires protection when a human being is very young.<sup>38</sup>

The Rishi knot area, the crown chakra, [is the area where] the four little bones remain open when a baby is born and slowly grow together; that hole slowly gets closed. [That area is] the crown, the lotus, the molding, the pinnacle of the energy from the root center to the crown center. If you leave a tuft of hair there, it allows you to connect with distant realms and harness the energy in your body for higher degrees of intuition and awareness.<sup>39</sup>

From Indian mythology comes the concept that neglect of the crown area demonstrates an unsettled awareness.<sup>40</sup> And, indeed, this area of the head holds much importance in Ayurveda. As illustration, Ayurvedic practitioners saturate the area to calm the Vata dosha and relax the nervous system.<sup>41</sup>

Hershman views the Joorā differently in Sikhism, writing:

Sikh men never cut their hair but they keep it well dressed and tied in a top-knot [sic]. . . . I do not think that the Brahmin tuft can be seen as a phallic symbol and if it were, it would certainly be a very limp and unproductive penis. Leach argues that it is a symbol of sexual restraint. The Brahmin's hair is almost completely shaved or at least cut very short. This obviously serves to distinguish the Brahmins from other castes but if I were to offer an explanation in terms of Punjabi culture it would be that just as the Brahmin is the purest of men who has not renounced the world (i.e. shaven the head) so he is symbolically tied to the material world by the existence of a single strand of hair. The Sikh top-knot [sic] is a much more likely phallic symbol especially if it is seen alongside the Hindu sadhu's snake-like matted locks, which are usually heaped up upon the head in a definitely phallic shape.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Kaur, Interview, April 14, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Hershman, "Hair, Sex and Dirt," 279, 282.

In *Roots of Yoga*, Mallinson and Singleton, connect Kundalini to the bindu, or semen, a concept that may shed light on the Rishi knot's connection to phallic symbology, householder virility and, ultimately, the upward rise of Kundalini energy:

[T]he Kundalini model of the yogic [sic] body originates in early tantric traditions, and subsequently becomes assimilated into *haṭhayoga*. . . . In this model, semen, known as *bindu*. . . is returned to, and prevented from dripping from, its store in the head. . . . In the bodies of ordinary men, semen continually drips from its lunar home in the head and is ejaculated or burnt up in the digestive fire. This process results in the ageing of the body and, ultimately, death. However, the (*haṭha*-) yogi [sic] can reverse this flow, impelling *bindu* upwards through the central channel and into the head by means of various *mudrās*.<sup>43</sup>

From this discussion, it is clear that divergent understandings of the Rishi knots' origins and practices exist, relating hair to harnessing spiritual and temporal power.

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<sup>43</sup> Mallinson and Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, 180.



## *Men's Beards to Cover the Chin's Moon Center*

In KYATBYB, men are taught to grow beards to cover the “moon center” located at the chin. While it’s been noted that Sikhs regard hair as a gift from God, not to be shorn nor thrown away,<sup>[44][45]</sup> this practice serves an additional purpose. According to the eighth-century Ayurvedic text, *Sushruta Samhita*, marma points, or “vital points,”<sup>46</sup> are gateways to the body’s inner pharmacy, which are scattered across the body. From the ears to the chin—ear to ear—this area is a moon spot, or center, and especially important for men:<sup>47</sup>

There is an understanding of men’s coming to an age when their moon center is overshadowed by the sun center during puberty. Keeping that area covered with hair is advised as a way to move away from boyhood to manhood.<sup>48</sup>

While not specifically referring to hair at the chin, Olivelle notes that shaving the hair in general can signify a return to infancy:

Elements of the ascetic initiatory ritual also indicate that shaving symbolizes the return to the sexually and socially undifferentiated status of an infant. During the Hindu ritual, for example, the shaven ascetic takes off all his clothes. The naked renouncer is significantly called *jatarupadhara*, which literally means “one who bears the form he had at birth.” The ascetic is not just naked; he is reduced to the condition in which he was born, to the state of a newborn infant. I believe that shaving is part of the symbolic complex that signifies his return to “the form he had at birth.” The absence of hair, just as much as nakedness, takes the initiate back to the prepubertal state of infancy.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Gabriel, Interview, January 13, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Bbc.co.uk, “Religions - Sikhism: The Five Ks.”

<sup>46</sup> Wisdomlib.org, “Marmas.”

<sup>47</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Olivelle (author), “Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions,” Hildebeitel & Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, 21.

## Covering the Head with a Cloth or Turban

In the article, “Locating the *sikh pagh*,” author Virinder S. Kalra writes:

As a symbol, the *pagh* [turban] works within certain societies – from Malaysia to North Africa – as a sign that varies within the framework of respect, religiosity and tradition. More recently, though, it has come to mark out fundamentalism. In the South Asian context it has stood and still does stand as a mark of social standing . . . . There are numerous rites of passage in the Panjabi [sic] and North Indian context which also require the presence of a turban. Perhaps the two occasions when a turban is still fairly common across religious divides is at weddings and funerals. At weddings the groom’s family and the groom wear turbans and at funerals the ceremony passes the head of the family on to the eldest son through the transfer of the *pagh*. As a method of patriarchal bonding and maintenance of relationship ties outside of family the *pagh* also has a significant role. The idea of, exchanging the turban as a sign of friendship, also again points to the central question of respect and stature that the turban embodies.<sup>50</sup>

The Sikh tradition of covering the head is incorporated into KYATBYB and is the recommended practice among all KYATBYB teachers. According to *The Aquarian Teacher*:

Turbans go way back in history as a spiritual practice. The top of your head is known as the Tenth Gate or the crown chakra. It is normally covered by hair that acts as antennae to protect the top of the head from sun and exposure, as well as to channel sun and vitamin D energy. . . . Coiling or knotting the hair at the solar centers and covering it with a natural fabric cloth helps in the management of the Kundalini energy. The turban in the Sikh tradition has become a symbol for various aspects of life and reverence. For the yogi [sic], it is also a technology for meditation and the management of the Kundalini energy.<sup>51</sup>

Mallinson and Singleton elaborate on the significant role of the Tenth Gate:

The Sahasrāra is sometimes said to be located at the *brahmarandhra* (‘the aperature of Brahmā/Brahman’ [sic]), the fontanelle [sic] on the top of the skull through which the yogi’s [sic] self or vital principle exits at death. This location is

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<sup>50</sup> Kalra, “Locating the *sikh pagh*,” *Sikh Formations*, 75-92.

<sup>51</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 54.

also called the *daśamadvāra* or ‘tenth door’ [sic], and is said to be the top of the Suṣumnā channel.<sup>52</sup>

In Sikhism, the turban, or dastar, is considered a physical article of faith and a “symbol of royalty and dignity”:<sup>53</sup>

Historically the turban has been held in high esteem in eastern and middle eastern cultures. Guru Gobind Singh transformed this cultural symbol into a religious requirement so that the Khalsa would always have high self-esteem. It differentiates Sikhs from other religious followers who keep long hair but wear caps or keep matted hair. The turban cannot be covered by any other head gear or replaced by a cap or hat. The turban is mandatory for [Khalsa] Sikh men and optional for Sikh women.<sup>54</sup>

Olivelle notes that the turban is “a traditional way of hair control in India.”<sup>55</sup> And

Hershman addresses this practice thusly:

Normally a Hindu man will remain bare-headed but on important occasions he may wear a turban. . . . There is no taboo on him entering the Hindu temple without a head-covering, and the village Pundit will hold services and read from sacred books bare-headed. It is only when performing *pūjā* (sacred worship) that the head must be kept covered. Brahmins traditionally left a central tuft of hair on their heads which was usually kept knotted. Sikh men never cut their hair but they keep it well dressed and tied in a top-knot [sic]. A Sikh only feels properly dressed if he is wearing a turban, which consists of a narrow strip of cloth wound round and round the head until the hair is properly bound.<sup>56</sup>

Kalra offers some caution regarding the over-emphasis on wearing a turban:

It is clear from the Guru Granth Sahib that the turban has symbolic importance as a means of denoting stature – and many of the verses set up the turban-wearing individual (man) as someone of stature, who is too busy worrying about

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<sup>52</sup> Mallinson and Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, 177-8.

<sup>53</sup> Sikhs.org, “Sikhism Religion of the Sikh People.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Olivelle (author), “Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions,” Hildebeitel & Miller (eds.), *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, 26-7.

<sup>56</sup> Hershman, “Hair, Sex and Dirt,” 279.

that stature to pay attention to the important things in life – i.e. focusing on the path to God.<sup>57</sup>

Kalra highlights the point that while external markers may represent one's highest ideals, they do not necessarily reflect one's spiritual proclivity and attainment.<sup>58</sup>

The turban in KYATBYB integrates many of its various meanings from far older practices—managing the crown chakra and Kundalini energy; controlling one's hair, which KYATBYB aligns with Kundalini-energy management; and symbolic representations of spirituality and life as a whole. And, while the turban's role in KYATBYB cannot be attributed to one specific area of influence, it appears to perpetuate the ancient traditions that espouse some of the same beliefs and values.

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<sup>57</sup> Kalra, "Locating the sikh *pagh*," *Sikh Formations*, 75-92.

<sup>58</sup> Khalsa-Baker, Electronic Correspondence, 2021.

### *Cleaning the Monkey Glands Each Morning Upon Waking*

As part of a daily morning routine, *The Aquarian Teacher* introduces the concept of cleaning the “monkey glands,”<sup>59</sup> at the back of the throat—located at the junction point of the vocal cords, esophagus, and trachea<sup>60</sup>—by removing any mucus and toxins immediately upon waking in the morning as part of a regular morning routine:

There is a tradition of cleaning the tongue that is part of the daily detoxification process. You can brush the tongue or use a tongue cleaner, and then massage the back of the tongue with the toothbrush, making yourself gag, and bring up the mucus to be spit out. (In 3HO we used to call this clearing the “monkey glands.”) Then brush your teeth and gums with a special mixture of 1 part salt and 2 parts potassium alum. This potassium alum mixture is effective for preventing gum disease, as it is very astringent and antiseptic.<sup>61</sup>

The human body goes through a detoxification process when we sleep, which is one of the many reasons proper sleep is considered one important way humans can maintain overall good health. In Ayurveda, the ideal time to go to sleep at night is during Kapha time, which, in the evening, falls between 6:00 PM and 10:00 PM, in part, so that these detoxification processes can occur during the nighttime Pitta window, which is between 10:00 PM and 2:00 AM.

Ayurveda also recommends scraping the tongue as part of one’s morning routine, and many ancient texts in Yoga and many Yoga instructors discuss purification processes that benefit the human body. For instance, the *GS* I.9-50, 54-9 address the body’s cleansing

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<sup>59</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 253.

<sup>60</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>61</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 253.

techniques.<sup>62</sup> One such practice is sutra, or “thread,” neti, which, when practiced regularly, can aid in the practice of khecarīmudrā [sic],<sup>63</sup> a Yoga technique “in which the tongue is turned above the palate to drink the nectar of immortality.”<sup>64</sup>

In order to properly engage in this and other Yogic practices, one must remove excess Kapha, which as noted previously in this paper, is a combination of the elements, water and earth, an accumulation of which fosters a tamasic nature. Because the guna, tamas, is associated with heaviness and darkness, a practitioner who is seeking the release of Kundalini energy and enlightenment would want to reduce this sense of heaviness to create an environment of sattva, or luminosity. Additionally, according to the Indian philosophy, Samkhya, human nature tends toward tamas.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, in order for one to move toward sattva, moving away from this heaviness is key.

Although new research reports the finding of salivary glands in the nasopharynx region, which can potentially moisten the back of the throat,<sup>[66][67]</sup> according to Ayurveda, no specific “monkey gland” exists in that region.<sup>68</sup> However, Ayurvedic doctors and practitioners recommend that this area of Kapha be cleaned properly in order to ensure the proper flow of prana, or life energy. “It is a junction point of all five senses and a significant lymphatic area.”<sup>69</sup>

Feuerstein draws connections between Hatha Yoga and Ayurveda, which both

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<sup>62</sup> Mallinson and Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, 73.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Rao, *Samkhya*, Online Course.

<sup>66</sup> Pappas, “Scientists discover new organ in the throat.”

<sup>67</sup> Ellsworth, Winkfield, & Greenberger, *Radiotherapy and Oncology*, “The tubarial Salivary glands: A potential new organ at risk for radiotherapy,” 154, 312-3.

<sup>68</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*.

offer cleansing techniques:

Furthermore, Hatha-Yoga [sic] and Âyur-Veda [sic] share certain purificatory techniques, notably the practice of self-induced vomiting (*vamana*) and physical cleansing (*dhauti*). These techniques have, among other things, a salutary effect on the body's metabolism.<sup>70</sup>

It is clear that many Yogic lineages, including KYATBYB, recommend cleansing technologies to aid in other practices, such as meditation and asana, so that practitioners may attain greater levels of spiritual understanding.

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<sup>70</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 81.

## *Cold Showers and the Use of Almond Oil*

KYATBYB recommends the practice of taking cold showers in the morning and then vigorously rubbing the body with almond oil under the cold water:

Massage the body from head to toe with warm almond or sesame oil. This process of oleation nourishes the body and is very beneficial for healthy skin as well as bringing balance to the nervous system and the mind. Now you are ready for your cold shower, your *ishnaan*, or hydrotherapy. . . . Since ancient times, people have prayed for the blessing of *ishnaan*. *Ishnaan* is the total sum of hydrotherapy. With *Ishnaan*, the body by its own inner strength creates the temperature that it can ward off the coldness of the water. *Ishnaan* is not just getting your body wet. There is a whole respect to it, there is a whole grace to it. In hydrotherapy it is said that the sixty percent water that the body is composed of can be totally exchanged in sixty minutes with the use of external water.<sup>71</sup>

Aspects of this practice are similar to an Ayurvedic practice, known as abhyanga, or self-massage, in which oil is rubbed on the body in a systematic way, with the choice of oil dependent on one's dosha. Typically, such a practice is done prior to showering, allowing the oil to soak into the skin for a few minutes, and then leaving a thin layer of the oil on the skin, if possible, after one's shower is complete.

In Yoga, one trains the body to be strong and aware, not relaxed. The use of almond oil, a warm, sattvic oil, and a cold shower, or a cold plunge, stiffens and tightens the body, keeping the heat inside, which is a concept in KYATBYB, retaining the body heat to attain the rise of Kundalini energy. This is also referred to a Yoga agni,<sup>72</sup> the fire of Yoga.<sup>73</sup> In this way, the

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<sup>71</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 253-4.

<sup>72</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Wisdomlib.org, "Yogagnimaya."



practitioner achieves Yogic refinement through purification in order to make the body resilient and strong.<sup>74</sup>

*The Aquarian Teacher* further elaborates on ishnaan's benefits:

When we do cold water massage, not only do we open up the capillaries, but then when the capillaries return to their normal size, that blood goes back into the organs. The heart, kidneys, lungs, liver – each organ has its own blood supply. In this way the organs are fully flushed. When the organs are flushed, then immediately the glands have to change their secretion. It is a natural law. And when the glands, which are the guardians of our health and life, change, youth returns. What is youth? Young glands. If your glandular system secretes correctly, the blood chemistry is a young chemistry.<sup>75</sup>

While exact parallels between modern science and ishnaan cannot be drawn, an article in the *Times of India* points to studies that support the idea that cold showers can provide health benefits:

According to a study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* [sic], bathing with cold water stimulates the release of norepinephrine from the sympathetic nervous system. Norepinephrine is a neurotransmitter that boosts energy, activates your brain, makes you alert and enhances your focusing power. . . . A study published in *Medical* [sic] hypothesises found evidence that bathing with cold water can relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety. A cold shower sends an overwhelming amount of electrical impulses from peripheral nerve endings to the brain, which has an anti-depressive effect. . . . According to a study published in the *North American Journal of Medical Sciences* [sic], cold water therapy has proven to reduce pain and inflammation. It also shortens the time body needs to recover after physical activity. . . . According to a study published 2016 in the journal *PLoS One* [sic], people taking cold showers are 29 per cent less likely to fall sick for work and school.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>75</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 254.

<sup>76</sup> *Times of India*. "4 Reasons Why Cold Showers Are Better."

In addition to awakening, preparing, and detoxifying the body and the nervous system as preparation for daily Yoga practice, the rigorous regulation of the body is also reflective of *tapas*, practices of austerity that are meant to focus the practitioner on the spiritual path and are discussed in many ancient texts, including the *Atharva-Veda*, which states, “[T]he deities themselves acquired their state of immortality through the practice of chastity and austerities,”<sup>77</sup> and *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali* (YS):

Yoga spiritualized the orientation of the earlier tradition of *tapas* by emphasizing self-transcendence. . . .At the same time, *yogins* [sic] adopted and adapted many of the techniques and practices of the older tradition of *tapas*. . . .[Patanjali] mentions [YS 2.32] *tapas* as one of the five observances of restraints (*niyama*) and declares (2.43) that through asceticism the body and its senses are perfected.<sup>78</sup>

Although the scientific efficacy and direct origins of this practice cannot be indisputably confirmed, there are indeed connections between the spirit of the practice of taking cold showers and using almond oil and ancient recommendations across Yoga and its sister science, Ayurveda.

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<sup>77</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 67.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

### Yogic Diet: Vegetarianism

Many Yogic traditions teach the concept of ahimsa, a Sanskrit term that translates to “non-violence” or “non-harming.” It is the first of the Yamas, rules of social behavior, which are the first limb of the Eight Limbs of Yoga in the *YS*. These rules also appear in other ancient texts:

These rules and observances are in fact much older than the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* itself, their forerunners being much in evidence in, for example, the *Mahābhārata* (2.6.1), as well as the earliest surviving Jain text, the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* (c. 350 BCE).<sup>79</sup>

In keeping with the concept of non-violence, if a person eats meat, the presumption is that the animal, which provided that meat, must be killed, an act that comprises some level of violence. Therefore, the vegetarian diet, which does not involve the death of animals, reflects the practice of ahimsa.

In India, the vegetarian diet is very common. In Jainism, “one of the three major socioreligious movements to which India’s spiritual genius has given birth,”<sup>80</sup> practitioners not only practice vegetarianism, but they also do not ingest any food that involves harm or death, including root vegetables.

The Sikh code of conduct, the Sikh *Rehat Maryada*, lists four practices that “must be avoided”<sup>81</sup>:

(1) Dishonouring [sic] the hair;/(2) Eating the meat of an animal slaughtered the Muslim way;/(3) Cohabiting with a person other than one’s spouse;/(4) Using tobacco.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Mallinson and Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, 51.

<sup>80</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 139.

<sup>81</sup> Sikhs.org. *Rehat Maryada*, Article XXIV.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

It should be noted that the *Rehat Maryada* does not forbid eating meat, but prescribes instead how an animal should be killed for its meat—killing an animal with one blow so as not to scare it at the time of its death. This type of meat is referred to as Jhatka meat, and the practice is performed within the Sikh and Hindu communities.<sup>83</sup>

Many Sikhs do not eat meat, including Amritdhari, Akhand Kirtani Jatha, Damdami Taksal, Namdhari, Nishkam Sewak Jatha, and 3HO community members. A vegetarian diet is also recommended as a sattvic diet, which aids in meditation and Yogic practices.<sup>84</sup>

The Yogic diet is discussed in *The Aquarian Teacher*:

The practice of Mitahara [moderate diet], in the Hatha yoga [sic] *Pradipika*, includes avoiding stale, impure and tamasic foods, and consuming moderate amounts of fresh, vital and sattvic foods. . . . According to Ayurveda, yogic theory of the gunas can be applied to the foods that we eat. **Sattvic**: pure essence, etheric quality. Examples: most fruit and vegetables, especially sun foods and ground foods. **Rajasic**: energy to accomplish, achieve or create. Examples: stimulating herbs and spices; many earth foods. **Tamasic**: heavy property of inertia, over-eating and indulgence. Examples: meat, poultry, stale food or leftovers, alcohol, intoxicating drugs. Since you create your future self with every bite, you can judge which types of foods are most appropriate to your aims. For those who are free to live a quiet, contemplative life, a sattvic diet is perfect.<sup>85</sup>

*The Aquarian Teacher* does not explicitly state that the Yogic diet is a vegetarian diet. But this text does advocate, along with the many other texts and philosophies, moving toward a sattvic style of living, particularly in diet, not only for overall health and well-being, but also to aid the practitioner along the contemplative path.

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<sup>83</sup> Khalsa-Baker, Electronic Correspondence, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 260.

### Conscious Communication

Communication is key to building strong relationships among humans and with our broader environment, and KYATBYB emphasizes the importance and ability to communicate consciously and with awareness:

A God-conscious person is not one who wears a turban, or who wears religious clothes. Those things are only a beginning to God-conscious habits. The God-conscious person is someone who can live up to his word under any given circumstance. Your word is what you create. Your word is the essence and creativity of your communication. It is your communion with yourself and others. When a person communicates what he means with perfect spirit, his communication is complete, and he can live up to his words. If you say to somebody, "I am your friend," live up to it with your utmost integrity and clarity about your own word. If you tell somebody you will stand by him and help him, then stand by and help under all conditions.<sup>86</sup>

From the perspective of consciousness, the Yoga-related sciences address communication from physical and metaphysical points of view, offering an understanding that the body is light and information in a physical form.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, communicating consciously from such a perspective involves not only communicating within the material realm, but also connecting with deeper aspects of the Self within the human experience. For instance, Ayurveda recognizes that the deepest state of human awareness is covered and hindered by the envelope of the body. As humans communicate with distant realms, the senses block that communication, but as we transcend past the gross, physical body, we are able to move beyond the physical and emotional levels.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 60-1.

<sup>87</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

All communication has its roots in thought. We cannot form a sentence without first drawing on some thought-based understanding. Additionally, according to Yoga, even subtle thoughts leave impressions. On this topic, in *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra* *Attributed to Patanjali*, Barbara Stoler Miller writes:

The turnings of thought, whether corrupted or immune to the forces of corruption, are of five kinds (5)/They are valid judgment, error, conceptualization, sleep, and memory (6)/The valid means of judgment are direct perception, inference, and verbal testimony (7)/Error is false knowledge with no objective basis (8)/Conceptualization comes from words devoid of substance (9) . . . Patanjali delineates five modes of thought, each of which can either be corrupted or immune to corruption. . . even the most subtle and benign workings of thought are obstructions to freedom of the spirit. Valid judgment is based on one of the three legitimate methods for apprehending material reality (7). Error is false knowledge that has no such basis in fact. Conceptualization is the tendency of thought to construct an image of reality that has no foundation beyond individual subjectivity. We may thus have verbal knowledge in which words and meanings fail to correspond to any objective reality. . . No thought is ever lost; rather, it is preserved as a subliminal impression or memory trace. These traces not only allow us to recall past events and perceptions, but they also actively shape future experiences in a never-ending process.<sup>89</sup>

Feuerstein further elaborates on Stoller Miller's explanation of the memories created by thought, noting how these impressions forge the path for future desires and actions:

Every single time we sense, feel, think, will, or do anything at all, we create what the yogic [sic] authorities style a subliminal activator (*samskâra*). . . The *vasanas*, then, are entire chains of similar karmic activators (*samskâra*). They are responsible for renewed psychomental activity in the conscious mind in the form of the five types of fluctuations or "whirls" (*vritti*) spoken of by Patanjali. The activators, combining into complex traits, are the hidden forces behind our conscious life and form the soil of our destiny.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Miller, *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom : The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*, 31-2.

<sup>90</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 241-2.

Therefore, according to interpretations of the YS, not only must we honor our word for ethical purposes, as discussed in *The Aquarian Teacher*, but also even our thoughts, be they communicated solely within or to others, impact our destinies within the human experience.

## Teachings for Men and Women

### *Women, Sensitivity, and Sainthood*

While many of KYATBYB's teachings are the same regardless of biological sex or gender identity, the practice offers some distinct instructions for males and females, among them the belief that females are 16 times more sensitive than men, an idea that is scattered throughout Vedic literature.<sup>91</sup> For example, the overall power of feminine energy is celebrated in the *Rig Veda's Devi Sukta* hymn,<sup>92</sup> in the *Devi Upanishad*,<sup>93</sup> and in the *Devi-Bhagavata*:

The most important Hindu work extolling the Divine in its feminine aspect is the voluminous *Devî-Bhagavata*, a Shâkta counterpart of the Vaishnava *Bhâgavata-Purâna*. . . . Here the great Goddess is introduced as the eternal essence of the universe.<sup>94</sup>

According to Vedic philosophy, female physiology is considered unique. However, men and women are similar; every man is a woman, and every woman is a man. For women, in the active lunar phase of life, feminine, or lunar, energy predominates. When the moon sets, the sun rises, as with menopause for example, and a woman becomes solar-predominate. For men, this process occurs in reverse. For instance, as men enter their older years, the lunar energy can predominate. Such a transition is not restricted by age and can happen in men and women at other times.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>92</sup> McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal*, 90.

<sup>93</sup> Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, 339.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>95</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.



While it can never be known for certain, it is possible that Yogi Bhajan was drawing on Ayurvedic teachings that also say women are 16 times more sensitive than men. This point may be true because of something called, srotas, which are openings or channels and are discussed in the *Charaka Samhita*, an Ayurvedic text that was likely written between 400 and 200 BCE.

According to Ayurveda, women have the following 16 srotas:

- Seven tissues, or dhatus
- Three main channels:
  - Prana – respiration
  - Digestive
  - Uda – governing water’s supply and management
- Three channels for:
  - Stool
  - Urine
  - Sweat
- Two breasts
- One vagina<sup>96</sup>

Because women are considered 16 times more intuitive, when these 16 centers are activated, one can create more sexual desire. However, when these centers are covered, the energy can be utilized for enlightenment.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

KYATBYB asserts that women have an arc-line across their chests. According to Ayurveda, for women, there are 11 moon lines, or moon centers, which regulate the lunar energies, based upon these arc lines. The moon spends two-and-a-half days in each moon center, thus a 28-day lunar cycle.<sup>98</sup>

In India, when men marry women, women are often given 16 moon decorations, or *solah shringara*, including a *bindi*, a dot in the middle of the forehead; a nose ring; a necklace to separate the heart and brain; henna; hair decorations; a *kamarband*, or ornamental belt; anklets; toe rings; and a bridal dress.<sup>99</sup>

Yogi Bhajan taught that women have four paths to enlightenment:

- Being a saint
- Serving a saint
- Marrying a saint
- Giving birth to a saint

Although, men have but one path to enlightenment—being a saint themselves.<sup>100</sup>

In Yoga in general and in other belief systems, women are bestowed greater importance. They carry civilizations and serve humanity. Therefore, they are afforded great reverence, none of which means that women only have four avenues available to them for enlightenment. Because of women's sensitivities and abilities, they are more likely to evolve and reach spheres of enlightenment more easily compared to men.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

*The Aquarian Teacher* addresses the current perspectives on gender, which differ from many of those in ancient texts:

[A]s we study the vast teachings on Humanology, we focus on how the universality of masculine/feminine energies affect our spiritual identity. The idea of studying the polarities of masculine/ feminine is that when these are accepted, balanced and honoured [sic] within us, then it serves our spiritual identity, which is the focus of these Teachings of Kundalini Yoga.<sup>102</sup>

In earlier Yogic texts, the well-delineated division between masculine and feminine energies may have existed to define and explain such concepts. However, such a hypothesis cannot be verified. It is possible that the genders were not meant to be sharply partitioned, as evidenced by Kshirsagar's comments regarding the fluidity of masculine-feminine energies and the above-noted quotation. Currently, discussions about gender are at the fore of many cultural conversations, and these ancient practices, while perhaps aligned with the thinking of their time, may not necessarily conform to a more modern understanding of gender.

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<sup>102</sup> *The Aquarian Teacher: KRI International Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga*, 241.

## *Pregnancy and Birth*

Regarding pregnancy and birth, KYATBYB teaches that the soul enters the body of an unborn baby after 120 days, however no basis for this concept has been found in any given text. Christopher Key Chapple, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, and Director, Master of Arts in Yoga Studies at LMU, provides context for when the soul is assumed to enter the body, based on other philosophies:

According to the Buddhists, [the soul] enters the body at the time of orgasm, 49 days after the karma-bundle has wandered. The Hindu narrative says that karmic essence enters food, which ends up in sperm (and egg), which presumably manifests as the zygote matures. The Jain narrative says that the soul enters the fetus directly following death.<sup>103</sup>

In his book, *Yoga, Karma, and Rebirth: A Brief History and Philosophy*, author, Stephen Phillips, emphasizes the differing philosophies as to the nature of the individual self, which KYATBYB refers to as the soul:

After appropriate adventures and rest in whatever worlds, the subtle body embodying the individual that died reincarnates along with the essential individual. Our Yoga minimalism prevents much further specification of the nature of the individual who dies and takes rebirth. . . . There is too much disagreement about the reality or unreality of the individual (*jivatman*) in broadest perspective, though there are convergences in practice. Advaitins would join Buddhists in saying that any individuality is ultimately illusory. For Advaita, Brahman is in the end the “I,” and Brahman does not really reincarnate. Theistic Vedantins disagree sharply, Ramanuja, for instance, seeing the reincarnating *jivatman* as an eternal individual. . . . There are other metaphysical variations, and the nature of the worlds we enter—there are so many possibilities to keep track of—is not clearly and uniformly conceptualized in classical literature or even in (Hindu) tantric texts specifically (I say this aware

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<sup>103</sup> Chapple, Electronic Correspondence, July 7, 2021.

that I may be speaking in haste—this is a vast ocean of texts). Much seems to be left purposely vague, as though itself in honor of the minimalist attitude!<sup>104</sup>

From an Ayurvedic perspective, in general, after 120 days, the second trimester of pregnancy, the baby is more likely to survive, and their destiny begins at that point. The formation of the heart happens at the fourth month, and the creation of the baby's own physical body will not be relying on that of the mother. There is a description of the mother and child in pregnancy in Ayurveda: the one who contains two hearts. The karma of the soon-to-be newborn is more solidified after the fourth month. Whatever happens to the mother, the baby might be able to survive on its own onward from this point.<sup>105</sup>

In many parts of India, women stay in post-partum confinement for 40 days. During this time, both mother and baby have daily massages, and the mother follows a strict diet in keeping with the belief that her recovery is impacted by what she consumes.<sup>106</sup> KYATBYB considers these first 40 days following birth to be a special bonding time. Ayurveda provides some support for this belief, noting that during this time, the mother and baby are exchanging ideas from previous karmic journeys and lifetimes. The mother and the baby are familiar with the ticking of their hearts, which is why there is this special bonding time until the baby's own sense faculties develop.<sup>107</sup>

Both ancient and modern science recognize the importance of the parent-child bond. Therefore, be it 40 days from the KYATBYB perspective, six weeks in the American workplace,

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<sup>104</sup> Phillips, *Yoga, Karma, and Rebirth: A Brief History and Philosophy*, 126.

<sup>105</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

<sup>106</sup> BabyCenter India. "Post-delivery confinement practices in India."

<sup>107</sup> Kshirsagar, Interview, January 14, 2021.

or even longer in many places around the world, the time spent with one's newborn appears to be invaluable—for the mother, as she recovers; both parents to adjust to their expanding family; and for the newborn as everyone takes time to create their new bonds.

### Concluding Remarks

As this paper demonstrates, similarities exist in thought and practice, not only between ancient Yogic teachings and the Humanology practices of KYATBYB, but also among different Yoga lineages and Indian religious communities. However, correlation does not imply causation. While it may be important for the human mind to seek indisputable facts and linear causations, we can only take the evidence provided and speculate as to what Yogi Bhajan actually knew and integrated from his own education and experience into KYATBYB's Humanology practices.

This paper illuminates the relationship between Humanology and various schools of Indian thought, pointing toward further areas for future research. To learn more about the concepts addressed in this paper, please refer to its citations.

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