



Grassroots Global Ministry

The Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji established the Sikh Dharma Ministry in 1971 to serve the organizational, leadership and spiritual needs of our Dharma, rekindling the *manji* tradition started by Guru Amar Das.

We have a diverse, rich resource of people that make up our Sikh Dharma Ministry. It's time that we learn more about each other, about what other Ministers are doing, and about how they are doing it. For our fourth volume of our Global Ministry in Action, we received inspiring stories of service from our brothers and sisters in Africa. Our theme for 2015 is the service and compassion of the eighth Sikh Guru—Guru Harkrishan Singh. We reflect upon his qualities in this newsletter as well.

Future issues will explore our service in other parts of the world...please enjoy these stories and may they inspire your service to humanity. We would love to hear from Ministers around the globe about your service projects as well!

Humbly,

The Sikh Dharma Ministers' Newsletter Team

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Journey to Africa

by MSS Krishna Kaur Khalsa
Los Angeles, CA

Bringing the technology of Kundalini Yoga to the African continent was always an important focus for the Siri Singh Sahib (Yogi Bhajan). Much like he sent people to Europe, South America, and Asia to plant seeds of truth and wisdom, he sent SS Pritam Hari Kaur to South Africa three decades ago. Today, despite some cultural and religious resistance, more indigenous people recognize the benefits of Kundalini Yoga as a way to better manage their growing stress levels and health issues. The process is slow, but if we continue to nurture it, we will have many beautiful teachers sharing this technology in their indigenous languages in villages throughout that great continent.



My focus on Africa began during a personal journey in 1969-1970, just before I encountered Yogi Bhajan and Kundalini Yoga. I went to Africa in search of my way to worship God; but after a year of trekking through four countries and numerous villages, I realized what I was looking for was not there. I left Africa feeling a deep sense of gratitude to the culture, the people, the land itself and the huge personal changes that took place in me. I vowed then to return one day, bringing something meaningful to show my appreciation.

In 2003, I brought 23 Black yoga teachers to Ghana. We toured for three weeks, taught yoga in several cities and villages, embraced our heritage and discovered that there were many who wanted to learn more about Kundalini Yoga. So I promised to come back and conduct Teacher Training, which I did in 2005. The video: "A Thousand Miles" tells that story.

Since then I have conducted six Level 1 KRI Teacher Trainings in Ghana, Togo and Burundi. I initially traveled two or three times a year for four or five weeks at a time to train and help bolster the Kundalini Yoga activities and uplift the fledgling yoga communities. It hasn't been easy but, together with the Ghanaian teachers, we organized the first Kundalini Yoga Festival in West Africa in 2007. I brought 27 yoga



teachers and enthusiasts from the U.S. to tour Ghana and participate in the Festival. In 2011 the second Festival was held in Togo, with people attending from far-off places such as Austria, Mexico, Canada, Brazil, U.S. and Germany. In 2013, Togo held the third Kundalini Yoga Festival, and I have just returned from the 2015 Yoga Festival in Togo.

The 3HO Togo community is the largest and strongest Kundalini Yoga community in the region. They started about 30 years ago with Siri Gian Singh, followed by various individuals who lived there for a while, teaching what they knew and moving on. When I arrived in 2005, the students had a humble yoga center and a unique conglomeration of Kundalini Yoga practices. I've been able to correct their yogic techniques and have shared with them the Sikh Gurdwara protocol. We moved the Siri Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh scriptures) from the entryway of the yoga room into a designated Gurdwara space.



I gave them my harmonium and an electronic player that broadcasts the Akhand Path (unbroken reading of the scriptures) from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India. I have brought *ramalas* (altar cloths for the Guru) given by Sikh Dharma International Ministry, Bibiji and others and done whatever I can to support their spiritual growth and understanding of the Sikh technology.

They need kangas for the Guru, tablas, karas of all sizes and most of all, a French translation of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib. Right now they have one of an eight-volume set from which only one person feels comfortable enough to take a *hukum* (sacred reading) and translate the English to French.

During my most recent trip to the Togo Festival, I spoke to a dozen KRI-Certified Kundalini Yoga teachers who were interested in becoming Sikh Dharma Ministers. Out of that group I think probably five are actually ready to take that step. Wahe Guru!

For more information or to donate to this program:

[A Thousand Mile Journey \(video\)](#)

[African Kundalini Yoga Festival \(website\)](#)





Training Teachers In Togo

**Reported by Siri Gian Singh Khalsa
(as told to SS Sangeet Kaur Khalsa)**

Of all the countries in Africa, Togo is the only one I know of where, if a foreigner asks a local “What is your religion?”, he has so much self-confidence and pride in his religion that he will answer “our local religion,” rather than Christianity or Islam.

I had the great good fortune to spend four years in Lomé, the capital of Togo, West Africa, from 1980 to 1984. My motivation for going there was a desire to study the healing traditions of African countries and to compare them to my own tradition of Reichian therapy developed by Wilhelm Reich. I had no idea what I was getting into!

I went to Yogiji with my concerns and asked, “How do you feel about my going there?” He said, “This is great! Just remember you are a Sikh, and you will be fine.” I took this to mean that I should keep my empathy and compassion and values strong.



Siri Gian Singh in Togo in the mid-1980s

Most of the Voodoo traditions of southern Togo required giving schnapps—hard alcohol—to the healers and witnessing animal sacrifices. I went to Yogiji with my concerns and asked, “How do you feel about my going there?” He said, “This is great! Just remember you are a Sikh, and you will be fine.” I took this to mean that I should keep my empathy and compassion and values strong. In all my time in Togo, I witnessed literally thousands of different animals being sacrificed. During every ceremony, the animal was led through the temple, held very lovingly, and taken to each area of importance in this particular spiritual center of Voodoo. I never once saw an animal struggle when it was being killed in this sacred way. It was as if the animal agreed to it.

It is meaningful to me that Guru Har Krishan represents the Eighth Body, the Pranic Body, the one that's developed through pranayam. My whole career has been as a Kundalini Yoga teacher and a Reichian therapist, where the primary focus is breath. How gratifying to find students who could appreciate the power of prana instantly!

Every morning about sixty people from all over Lomé came to group Sadhana in my home. This was a huge sacrifice for them, because at the time the country had one of the most repressive regimes in the world. There were police barricades everywhere; there was a law that you couldn't have more than five people congregating without government permission. By Guru's Grace none of the students ever got into trouble. It may have helped that the President's personal secretary came to my Kundalini Yoga classes! Lomé is still the one place in all of sub-Saharan Africa where even today there is a morning group Sadhana.

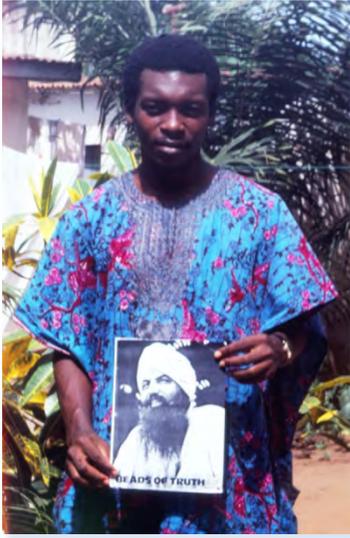
With the blessings of Yogiji, I led two Teacher Trainings in Lomé, both very well attended. By necessity, the cost to the students was very little, and people who didn't have money could do service as their exchange. Many of the teachers traveled and brought Kundalini Yoga to other parts of Africa.

For decades now, our beloved MSS Krishna Kaur has been dedicated to spreading the teachings in Togo and Ghana. I have the deepest respect and gratitude to her for her tireless and inspired teaching that continues to this day. She is the Lead Trainer for KRI Level I and II, helping to unite Kundalini yogis throughout Africa. Through Krishna's work in spreading Kundalini Yoga and the wisdom of our Gurus in Togo, a legacy has been established which now has a life of its own.



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In closing, I want to share one of countless examples of the generosity and empathy of the Togolese people. In the early 1980s the government of Nigeria expelled all the foreigners who were working there. Togo is located two countries north of Nigeria, along the coast. Millions of refugees, trying to get home, traveled along that coastal road through Lomé. There was chaos and desperation, as people were starving, without food or water. Without hesitation, without a thought about danger or cost, all the Kundalini Yoga students rallied. We got supplies from many sources and for the next seven days everyone served the refugees tirelessly, selflessly. Over and over, people taught me the essence of Guru Har Krishan in their everyday actions of sacrifice and compassion.



I was so inspired to experience a culture where everyone, young and old, believes in God; that we are all connected; that in an instant we can go from wealth to poverty or vice versa; that in an instant we can leave our body and be in another form. In their understanding of life, the Togolese people embody Yogiji's words: "If you can't see God in all, you can't see God at all."

Dr. Siri Gian Singh Khalsa has been a student of Kundalini Yoga and meditation for 40 years under the guidance of the Siri Singh Sahib. He is a certified massage therapist, acupressure practitioner, and herbalist.



Bringing Light to Africa

**Reported by Lydia Limbe
Level I Kundalini Yoga student
Nairobi, Kenya**

Alex Gitonga had lived most of his life wondering what was wrong with him. Deep down he did not believe there was anything wrong. But after years of being told he could not learn, it's no wonder that he started to question that perhaps something was wrong with him. It was not until he started Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training that he finally got to put a name to it—Dyslexia. He had not counted on that happening. He had merely signed up for Teacher Training, being extremely curious about what the Aquarian Age was all about.

So when the course structure was being spelled out at the beginning of Week One, and he heard that there would be a written exam, he opted out. Why? He has difficulty writing. As “luck” would have it, the teacher, Gobinde Singh, was himself a person with Dyslexia. As yogis know, nothing is a coincidence.



Alex Gitonga

[Alex] had merely signed up for Teacher Training, being extremely curious about what the Aquarian Age was all about....As yogis know, nothing is a coincidence.



Gobinde assured Alex that he would get somebody to help him with the writing assignment. In the meantime, he showed him some Kundalini Yoga techniques that he could practice for Dyslexia, such as Kirtan Kriya. Alex dug in, as long as he did not have to write.

“Until then I steered clear of activities that required writing,” he said. He did Kirtan Kriya all the time, everywhere. Come exam time, Alex felt that the person who was assisting him was writing too slowly. He took over the papers and did the written exam himself!



Alex is among the approximately 20 teachers to have been trained in Africa through [Yoga Teachers 4 Africa](#), which was started in 2009 by Sat Darshan Singh when he went to Burundi. "I lived there from 2008-2012, and it occurred to me to make Kundalini Yoga available for people of Burundi, and by extension to other parts of Africa," says Sat Darshan.

Yoga Teachers 4 Africa created a system that makes teaching Kundalini Yoga in Africa possible. To start things off, a number of Kundalini yoga teachers in Europe contributed to creating full scholarships for the students.

Jeet Singh and Sat Darshan Singh

In addition, these teachers offered their services as seva, thereby reducing the cost further. Burundi has since had two teacher trainings, and now has a center where Kundalini Yoga is taught daily. Also, as a result of the unrest in Burundi, one of the yogis who fled to Rwanda has started classes in Kigali. In Kenya, the first teacher training was conducted in 2014. The 2015, the students met [Sat Darshan Singh](#), who taught during Level One Teacher Training. Not only did he share with us his music, he serenaded us with it every morning during Sadhana.



For more information, visit [Yoga Teachers 4 Africa](#).



Teaching and Seva in South Africa

Reported by Ravi Kaur
Johannesburg, South Africa



The first deaths from AIDS in South Africa occurred under the Apartheid regime of PW Botha in 1985. By 1990 a national ante-natal survey discovered that 0.8% of all pregnant women were infected and that the dominant mode of transmission was heterosexual sex. This statistic challenged widespread prejudice that HIV/AIDS was a “gay disease.” A great deal of stigma surrounded the disease and in the early 1990s some prominent white leaders publicly claimed that a supposed “promiscuity” of gays and blacks was the reason for the higher than average contagion levels of these two populations. This claim incited even further racism by promoting the use of the disease as a tool to rid South Africa of its black population.

When the Government of National Unity came into power in 1994, with Nelson Mandela as president, HIV/AIDS was made one of 22 lead projects in the Reconstruction and Development program instituted by the new government. The years that followed saw many failures to sufficiently address the massive destruction that the disease created within families and communities. By 2005, with more than 5 million South Africans infected, South Africa was the country with the highest HIV rates in the world. The government of Thabo Mbeki (president-elect after Nelson Mandela) did much damage to the fight against HIV/AIDS by claiming that HIV does not lead to the development of AIDS.



Many activist organisations were created during the decade after 1998, to fight for the national provision of antiretroviral drugs to pregnant women and those who were HIV-positive. It was during this time, in 2006, that the eldest son of Nelson Mandela, 54-year-old Makgatho Mandela, died of AIDS. President Mandela was one of the first public figures to state openly that his son had died of AIDS. This did much to dispel the awful stigma surrounding the

disease. This stigma caused many unnecessary and premature deaths of people from AIDS because they were too afraid to be tested lest they be rejected and sometimes even killed by their communities if they were discovered to be HIV+.

In this climate, in 1997 I began teaching Kundalini Yoga to people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The emotional atmosphere in the groups I encountered was filled with fear. Every week someone died, and everyone was frightened that it would be their turn next. Every weekend there were funerals. In Africa funerals are very sacred and important rituals and they can last for an entire weekend. Huge crowds attended the funerals of those who had died. Every week there were also protest marches and rallies supporting the fight for the provision of free antiretrovirals in hospitals and clinics. Again, everyone showed up in support. This electric energy, permeating through the classes that I taught, was amplified by the teachings of Yogi Bhan and the Naad. Students began to gain weight, skin lesions started to clear up, and stress reactions diminished. It was a time of both fear and desperate hope.



During this time Yogi Bhan visited Cape Town for the World Parliament of Religions (December 1999). He also visited Johannesburg and taught some classes in both cities. I was privileged to be able to take part in the classes and to visit with him personally. He blessed my work and also my young son who was 10 at the time, granting him a scholarship to attend MPA in Amritsar!



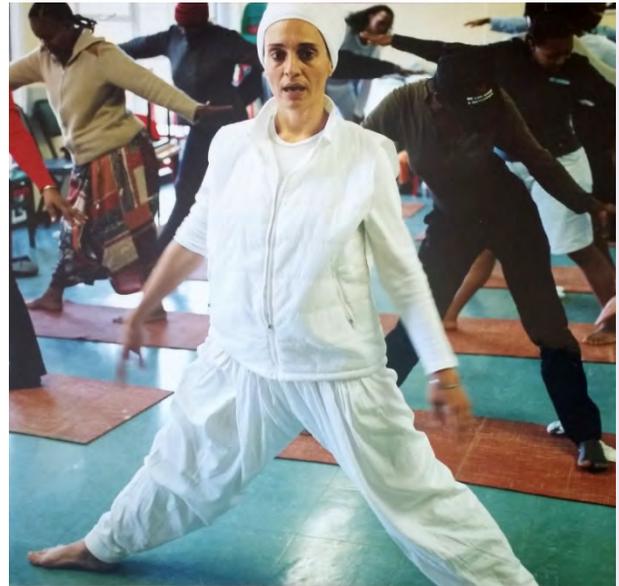
Yogi Bhan in 1999 with religious and spiritual leaders at World Parliament of Religions in South Africa

With the Zuma-led national government rollout of antiretrovirals in 2009, my seva with people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS changed. The rates of HIV infection are now lower, the stigma has largely been eradicated, and people see HIV/AIDS as a treatable disease.

I continue to teach Kundalini Yoga and meditation, with a major focus on the opportunistic infections that occur with the disease, such as tuberculosis and pneumonia. In my private practice I specialize in working with mental illness, which constitutes much of my seva in the poorer communities as well. We have large numbers of refugees spilling into South Africa from war-torn countries in Africa. Drawing on the teachings of Yogi Bhan and my formal counseling training, I work with women who have often been subjected to severe war-related trauma.

Many of these women are also HIV+ and so the disease remains present; however the focus is more on education and relieving the stresses associated with extreme poverty.

A further seva project—training black Kundalini Yoga teachers in South Africa—has manifested through the Grace of the Guru, after a decade and a half of working to create the energy for it to happen. The need for this has become increasingly more apparent: black communities need dynamic black role models. Seva is very much part of the African way. It is not unusual or very remarkable here to find many people involved in uplifting their communities in selfless ways. I am simply one of the many who do this, and I am ever grateful to Yogi Bhajan and the teachings for the powerful tools I am able to share.



I am continually inspired in my daily sadhana by the teachings of Yogi Bhajan. I am repeating the Twenty-One Stages of Meditation for 1008 days (48 cycles of 21 days). The qualities of Guru Harkrishan— empathy, compassion and ultimate sacrifice—are amplified through this sadhana. With this daily practice there comes a growing awareness of my connection to the Infinite, and thus to these qualities of empathy, compassion, and ultimate sacrifice.

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Spiritual Awakening in South Africa

by SS Pritam Hari Kaur Khalsa
Robertson, Western Cape, South Africa



South Africa is now 20 years into democracy—not even a generation. The 3HO presence here started with the blessing and directive of the Siri Singh Sahib in the mid-1980s. Since then, the GINI index (universal indicator of disparity between wealthy and disadvantaged) has worsened. The infrastructure and systems of electricity and water supply are deteriorating.

At the same time, social conscience and empowerment is awakening and making itself heard, as seen in the recent student revolts. From the yogic side of things, we're doing KRI Teacher Training Levels I and II. The teaching in [South Africa](#) reaches as far as Burundi in the north with the support of personal fundraising efforts.

My family [husband SS Har Bhajan Singh and my son, Miri Piri Academy graduate Hari Bhajan Singh] are building an [eco-community farm](#) in the Western Cape aiming at off-the-grid sustainability, which will become a beacon of hope in the fragile energy supplies of times to come. [3HO South Africa](#) hosts an annual Southern Spring Festival over the September Equinox in Gauteng, [known as] “the cradle of humankind.”



South Africa Resources:

[Melody Hill Retreat \(Johannesburg\)](#)
[Spring Kundalini Yoga Fest](#)



Having lived at Hamburg Guru Ram Das Ashram for eight years, Yogi Bhajan asked Pritam Hari Kaur to join Har Bhajan pioneering Kundalini Yoga in South Africa in 1987. Their son Hari Bhajan runs the family business, Earth Products, in Johannesburg. Pritam and Har Bhajan are part of a sustainable farm community in the Western Cape. She created the KUNDALINI YOGA FAN, a picture book in yoga and is the lead teacher trainer for South Africa.

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**"You answered the call of duty—
that's the beauty of life."**

**Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan
Singh Khalsa Yogiji
(July 7 1977)**