

JULY 2026

LE JOURNAL



Stories, Insights, and Perspectives
from the 3HO Europe Community





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July 2026

**Stories, Insights, and Perspectives
from the 3HO Europe community.**

Le Journal is the digital magazine of 3HO Europe. Through contributions from community members across Europe and beyond, Le Journal highlights local initiatives, shares personal experiences, and explores how the teachings can support us in everyday life.

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THE JOURNEY WITHIN THE JOURNEY

Experiencing a Yatra Through the Eyes of Fateh Singh

by Sat Shakti Kaur

There are journeys that take you across continents and then there are journeys that take you deeper into yourself. For Fateh Singh, 3HO Europe Board Member, the 2025 Akal Daya Yatra to India became both.

Organised by *Sikh Dharma International* (SDI), the yatra brought together a small but dedicated group from across the world to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Yet what unfolded went far beyond a historical observance. It became an exploration of what it truly means to walk a spiritual path, together.

A Yatra Is Not an Ordinary Trip

"When you go on a yatra," Fateh Singh reflects, **"you don't just go to see, you go to experience, and to be changed."**

The yatra was carefully coordinated while still preserving the openness that is central to a true spiritual journey. Rather than experiencing India through a rigid, over-programmed schedule, participants remained present to the unexpected encounters, invitations, and moments of connection that naturally arose along the way.

For Fateh Singh, some of the most meaningful experiences emerged precisely from this spirit of receptivity: sharing kirtan spontaneously, meeting Sikh leaders, discovering lesser-known sacred spaces, and allowing the journey itself to guide the rhythm of the experience.



Walking in Sangat: The Power of Shared Experience

The group was small – about 20 participants – but carried a wide range of experience, from lifelong Sikhs to dedicated Kundalini Yoga practitioners.

Very quickly, something shifted. A sense of unity emerged that bridged differences in culture, background, and perspective.

"There's something about traveling together like this," Fateh Singh explains. **"You go through intense experiences – early mornings, long days, unfamiliar environments – and it brings people closer very fast."**

Through shared practice, conversation, music, and experience, bonds formed naturally. The presence of experienced leaders and long-time practitioners helped anchor the group in a shared sense of purpose.



Ever Present Gurbani

For Fateh Singh, one of the most powerful aspects of the journey was that spirituality was not confined to moments of formal practice. It permeated the environment itself.

The sound current of Gurbani was ever-present. The Siri Guru Granth Sahib was being recited in gurdwaras, banis echoed through loudspeakers before dawn, devotional music drifted through streets and temples. The experience of the sacred was continuous.

"The sound current was everywhere," he reflected. Whether sitting in the early morning hours at Anandpur Sahib, traveling between villages, or entering small local gurdwaras, every experience seemed connected back to the divine through Naad, prayer, remembrance, and history.

This kind of total immersion is difficult to replicate outside of India. The yatra was not only about visiting sacred places, it was about entering an environment where spiritual life infused the rhythm of daily existence itself.



In Kundalini Yoga and Sikh Dharma, spiritual development is not understood as an escape from life, but as a transformation of consciousness within life itself. The yatra offered participants the rare experience of living for days inside an environment where remembrance of the Divine was woven continuously into daily existence – through sound, prayer, music, service, history, and community.

Music as Seva

Kirtan was not simply an activity during the yatra – it was its heartbeat.

Participants brought instruments, voices, and devotion into every space they entered. Whether in gurdwaras, private homes, or spontaneous gatherings, they shared sacred music as an offering.

"Music was very important," Fateh Singh reflects. **"People were really touched...through us, they saw the spirit of Sikh Dharma alive in the West."**

In this way, kirtan became both seva (service) and connection. It transcended language and culture, creating shared experiences that defined the journey.

The Many Faces of the Sacred

One of the most profound insights for Fateh Singh came through experiencing the diversity of sacred spaces.

At places like the Golden Temple and Anandpur Sahib, the atmosphere was vibrant and immersive. **"There's always music,"** he says. **"It carries you...it's a meditative sound."**

These spaces are alive with devotion—crowds, movement, continuous recitation. Meditation here happens through participation in a collective current. Yet the yatra also revealed quieter, more hidden dimensions.

In a meditation space associated with Mata Sahib Kaur, the experience shifted dramatically. The silence was deep, almost tangible. **"We almost started to cry,"** Fateh Singh recalls. **"The sweetness of that space... it was something very different."**

This contrast became one of the key teachings of the journey: the sacred is not one-dimensional. It expresses itself through both sound and silence, intensity and stillness.



When History Becomes Alive

The Akal Daya Yatra connected participants not only to sacred places, but to lineage.

Visiting locations associated with the Sikh Gurus and historical figures transformed intellectual knowledge into lived experience. The stories of courage and sacrifice—central to Sikh Dharma—became tangible.

"You study these things," Fateh Singh reflects, **"but then you're there—and you can still feel it."**

This continuity is deeply meaningful for those on the Kundalini Yoga path, whose teachings are interwoven with Sikh Dharma. The yatra becomes a bridge between past and present, between study and embodiment.



The Beauty of the Ordinary

Amid the intensity, some of the most meaningful moments were unexpectedly simple.

Toward the end of the journey, Fateh Singh describes visiting a local family home. Sitting together, sharing food, relaxing in an ordinary setting—it felt deeply grounding.

"It was so cozy, so normal," he says. **"And you realize—this is life."**

This moment captured something essential about the yatra experience. Through the structure and intention held by SDI, participants were not only brought to major sacred sites, but also into authentic human connection.

And in those moments, the boundary between the spiritual and the everyday dissolved.

Why Go on a Yatra?

A yatra offers something difficult to access through ordinary travel or even through daily spiritual practice at home.

It's an opportunity to move beyond an intellectual understanding of the teachings and into direct experience: to walk through places connected to Sikh history, connect with the roots of the dharmic path, and to experience spirituality woven into the rhythm of daily life. The teachings are embodied.

More than a journey to sacred places, a yatra becomes a journey into a different way of experiencing life itself.

The Journey Continues

When asked if he would recommend the experience, Fateh Singh's answer is clear: **"Go."**

Not because it is easy, but because it is real.

A yatra invites you into something deeper than comfort or certainty. It invites you into experience—raw, meaningful, transformative.

And through the vision and support of SDI, that invitation becomes accessible: a bridge between worlds, between traditions, between who you are and who you are becoming.

Because ultimately, a yatra is not about the places you visit.

It is about the person you become along the way.

Sikh Dharma International supports the study and practice of Sikh Dharma through educational programs, spiritual gatherings, and yatras that bring these teachings and traditions to life. Visit sikhdharmainternational.org to learn more.

Written by Sat Shakti Kaur, Project Director for 3HO Europe.



IDENTITY AND DIVINITY: REMEMBERING THE SACRED WITHIN

Reflections from MPA Womens Camp

by Sukhdev Kaur Khalsa



"Dignity is a way to Divinity and Divinity is a way to Infinity" - Yogi Bhajan July 25, 1976



"There are three murti, three faces of God, front, left, and right. Your front is identity, your left is dignity, and your right is divinity." - Yogi Bhajan July 4, 1996

Remembering our Sacred Identity

When I was about 20, living in Mexico, I was searching for my place in the world. During a Level 2 Teacher Training in Kundalini Yoga, I heard a lecture by Yogi Bhajan for women that hit me like an arrow to the heart. The overarching theme was simple yet so meaningful: Let your Identity come from your Divinity. It felt like a direct conversation with my soul.

The lecture was full of wisdom that has guided my life since then. Applying that concept to my life has been one of the most important shifts in how I relate to the world as a woman. It helped me remember that our strength does not come only from the roles we play — mother, daughter, professional — but from a connection to something much deeper. If our identity comes from the Divine, then connecting to that sacredness is the most natural thing to do.

The Reality of the "Everyday Rollercoaster"

It's easy to talk about Divinity when life is calm, but this becomes challenging when we are all so busy in this ever-changing world. Connection with the Sacred requires presence. As women, we need space to breathe and simply be. From that state of relaxation, devotion is felt in the way we move, the way we speak, and the way we hold what is given to us in life.

In the 1970s and 80s, the 3HO Women's Camps would last for two months at a time. Women needed a space away from home to recharge and reset, free from the burden of the everyday rollercoaster. Today that need feels even more urgent. We need places where we can set down everything that we carry and remember who we are.



The Women's Camp as a Living Experience

At Miri Piri Academy, we have been organizing Women's Camps in India for the past five years. There is a unique strength that grows when women come together, especially in spiritual places, sharing timeless wisdom and being there for one another.

Divinity is our identity. How can we experience it? Being together as women allows our shared experiences, questions, and insights to reflect back through each other. There is a natural support that arises where we feel held and understood. In this shared presence, our sacred identity is collectively strengthened. We uplift one another simply by being together in awareness, reminding each other of what truly matters.

I love seeing the transformation that happens when we are in such a collective, supported, and sacred space — the tension in the shoulders drops, the mind opens to the unknown experience that India itself brings, and we soften beyond the social backgrounds and masks we carry in the world.



Welcoming the Unknown

India is the ultimate teacher of the unexpected — a sudden parade in the middle of the road with cracking loudspeakers, or lively goats taking over the narrow alleyway where we are supposed to walk. In the beauty of these unexpected realities, the mind stops and comes back to the present moment. I have certainly learned to relax when things are beyond our control, which happens a lot when you are in India! Welcoming the unexpected is one of life's greatest lessons, and stepping outside our comfort zone helps us meet uncertainty with more presence and ease.

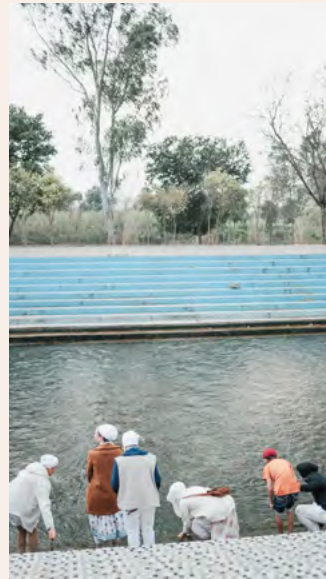
"I know the unknown is known to me" - Yogi Bhajan



When Chai becomes Sacred

We do so much healing work, yoga, gatka, and meditation during the Women's Camps, but the real magic often happens around the chai breaks. Everyone opens up and we have the nicest conversations, sharing our struggles and joys in life. The chai becomes a catalyst for digesting all the work we do on the yoga mat.

Most people who come through the Women's Camp say they enjoy the chai breaks most of all! The sweetness and energizing blend of spices and black tea feels grounding and comforting. It helps us relax and be real with one another through all the physical practices and deep inner work that happens during the camp. Somehow, the chai keeps us connected to the simple humanity of the experience.



Living and Carrying Sacredness Forward

Every time I fly to India leaving my family behind feels heartbreaking. Nevertheless, once I am there with our MPA family, the feeling changes. Receiving all these wonderful women from around the world always feels like a family.

Held by the presence of other women, we can set down the roles we carry in daily life. There is a natural balance that happens when we are together. We support one another simply by being present, and we remember that we do not have to carry everything alone.

The hard part is returning home — how do we carry the sacredness of what we experienced into our everyday rollercoaster? Yet a seed of that experience remains. We carry the transformation in our cells. It shows itself in how we handle stress at home, how we relate to our children, how we move through ordinary tasks, and how we return to our practice and presence again and again.

The teachings that inspired these Women's Camps continue to remind us that beneath all the roles and responsibilities of life, there is something timeless and sacred within us that can always be remembered.

Sukhdev Kaur Khalsa is a Lead Trainer and Sikh Dharma Minister who moved from Mexico to Estonia in 2004 to found the Guru Ram Das Ashram and Dharamsaal School. Alongside supporting the Baltic sangat, she leads the annual Women's Camp in India through Miri Piri Academy (MPA), creating spaces for women to reconnect with themselves through practice, community, and shared experience.

Visit miripiriacademy.org/womens-camp for more information about the Women's Camp



ANCIENT PRACTICE, MODERN INQUIRY

by Sat Shakti Kaur



For decades, practitioners of Kundalini Yoga and meditation have relied less on external validation and more on direct experience. You practice. You breathe. You meditate. And over time, something changes.

The mind becomes quieter. The nervous system steadies. Energy shifts. Awareness expands.

Long before laboratories began measuring stress hormones or mapping neural pathways, yogis understood that disciplined spiritual practice transforms human consciousness. Today, modern research is beginning to explore and document some of these effects through the lenses of neuroscience, psychology, physiology, and medicine.

Still, the growing body of research around Kundalini Yoga and meditation is significant—not because it replaces lived experience, but because it helps translate ancient wisdom into language modern institutions can better understand.

Most practitioners know the experience intuitively. After a yoga class or meditation practice, we feel different—more present, more balanced, more connected.

Part of yogic training is learning to trust that process without needing constant intellectual confirmation. In fact, stepping beyond the analytical mind is itself part of the practice. The thinking mind wants to ask incessant questions, evaluate, compare, and control. Yoga invites us into direct experience instead.

And yet, it is undeniably fascinating to see research beginning to document some of the physiological and psychological shifts practitioners have long described.

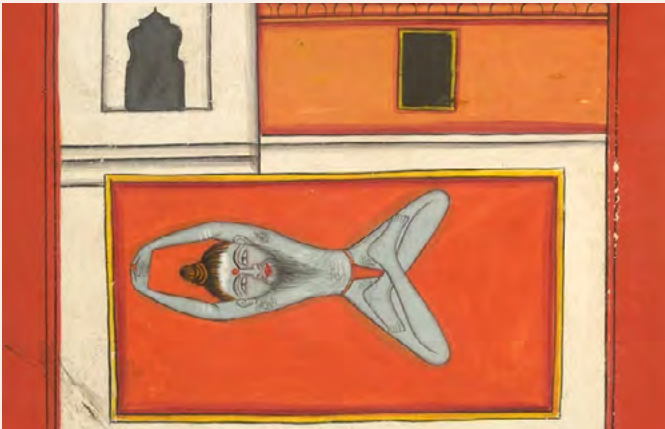
Research into Kundalini Yoga and meditation has expanded significantly over the past two decades, examining areas such as:

- *Stress and anxiety reduction*
- *PTSD and trauma recovery*
- *Sleep improvement*
- *Cognitive decline and healthy aging*
- *Emotional regulation*
- *Addiction recovery*
- *Nervous system resilience*
- *Depression and mood disorders*
- *Attention and learning*

The Challenge of Measuring the Immeasurable

At the same time, yoga does not fit neatly into scientific frameworks.

A single meditation may affect mood, sleep, memory, hormonal balance, emotional resilience, social connection, and spiritual awareness simultaneously. Science often attempts to isolate one measurable variable at a time, while yogic systems work holistically.



There are also dimensions of practice—subtle energy, intuition, expanded awareness, spiritual experience—that science is not currently equipped to measure.

Then there is the practical reality: rigorous research is extraordinarily expensive.

As current clinical trial models have evolved, even small pilot studies can require enormous resources. A modest independent proof-of-concept study may cost between \$5,000 and \$25,000, while a formal clinical pilot designed to secure institutional funding can easily reach \$250,000 or more. Full-scale clinical trials often cost millions—and in some cases tens of millions—of dollars.

Those costs are driven by:

- *Institutional review boards & ethical oversight*
- *Participant recruitment*
- *Biostatistics and data analysis*
- *MRI imaging and biomarker testing*
- *Long-term participant tracking*
- *Professional clinical staff*
- *Regulatory compliance*
- *Multi-site coordination*

All of this investment may document just one aspect of a single meditation protocol.

From a yogic perspective, that can seem both remarkable and limiting. Yogis have spent thousands of years refining these technologies through direct human experience. Modern

research, by comparison, often examines isolated pieces of a much larger system.

And yet, the research matters.

Because once the effects are documented in scientific language, doors begin to open.

Sat Bir Singh Khalsa and the Expanding Field of Yoga Research

One of the central figures helping bridge the worlds of yoga and science is Sat Bir Singh Khalsa.

Faculty at Harvard Medical School, , Director of Research for the Kundalini Research Institute, and longtime practitioner of Kundalini Yoga, Dr. Khalsa has spent decades helping advance the scientific study of yoga and meditation.

His work sits within the growing field of Mind-Body Medicine, which examines how practices such as yoga, meditation, breath regulation, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques affect both psychological and physiological health.

In his own research, Dr. Khalsa has conducted clinical trials evaluating yoga interventions for insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic stress, and anxiety disorders, as well as applications within schools and workplace settings.





He describes these practices not only as tools for symptom reduction, but as behavioral techniques that allow patients to become directly involved in their own healthcare. Rather than relying exclusively on external interventions, yoga and meditation invite people to actively participate in improving their wellbeing and quality of life.

In some cases, these approaches have shown outcomes comparable to – or more effective than – existing pharmacological treatments, often without the same degree of side effects.

But Dr. Khalsa's role extends beyond his own research studies. Through conferences, publications, editorial leadership, and collaboration across the yoga therapy world, he has become one of the key connectors within the broader field of yoga research. He works closely with researchers, clinicians, and institutions exploring many different applications of yoga and meditation and is deeply familiar with the rapidly evolving scientific landscape surrounding these practices.

He serves as editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, chairs the scientific program committee for the annual Symposium on Yoga Research through the International Association of Yoga Therapists, and is chief editor of the medical textbook *The Principles and Practice of Yoga in Health Care*.

This year, he will help lead another milestone initiative at the European Yoga Festival: the first-ever Symposium on Yoga Research and Applications, bringing together researchers, practitioners, educators, and teachers to explore the expanding body of knowledge around yoga and meditation.

Research as a Bridge

Recent research within the broader field has explored areas such as:

- *Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)*
- *PTSD and trauma-responsive yoga*
- *Sleep disorders*
- *Stress physiology*
- *Cognitive decline and aging*
- *Meditation and brain health*

Some studies have examined structural and functional changes in the brain associated with meditation practices such as Kirtan Kriya,



including possible increases in hippocampal volume among older adults.

Practices that yogis have used for generations are now being explored through MRI imaging, neurochemistry, and clinical psychology—not to “prove” spirituality, but to better understand how these technologies affect human functioning. Research alone does not guarantee widespread institutional adoption.

While Kundalini Yoga and meditation practices have been introduced by individual teachers into hospitals, schools, prisons, recovery programs, veteran services, and community settings, large-scale integration within public systems is still emerging. Yet the growing body of evidence creates possibility.

As research continues to develop, more institutions may become willing to explore yogic practices as complementary tools for wellbeing, prevention, recovery, and resilience.

For practitioners, the value of Kundalini Yoga has never depended on scientific validation. The technology works whether or not a study exists to confirm it. But as the body of research continues to grow, more people may feel inspired to explore practices that could profoundly support their lives.

In that sense, the research is not simply academic. It is part of a larger process: building a bridge between ancient wisdom and the modern world.

The Kundalini Research Institute maintains an online library of more than 200 published studies on Kundalini Yoga and meditation. Visit [Kundalini Research Institute](https://www.kundaliniresearchinstitute.com) to learn more.

Written by Sat Shakti Kaur, Project Director for 3HO Europe.



WASHING THE MARBLE FLOORS

How MPA Students Find Victory at the Golden Temple

by Sukhdev Kaur Khalsa



Every year students and teachers from Miri Piri Academy celebrate the end of the school year by doing a 40-day seva washing the marble floors around the Sacred Pool of Nectar at Harimandir Sahib, known as the Golden Temple. For many of these teenagers, this is a highlight in their experience in India, being so special that even alumni mention this as their most special bond to India years after they experienced it.

This tradition at MPA follows the footsteps of the Siri Singh Sahib (Yogi Bhajan) himself:

"When I qualified and realized and experienced myself as a yogi, and when the world around me acknowledged me as a yogi, even then I needed the Guru's Grace. I had to mop the floors of the Harimandir for a long time to clean my own slate." - Yogi Bhajan, Beads of Truth, Winter 1986.

The Amrit Vela Journey

We wake up every morning at 1:30 am, hop on the legendary MPA yellow school bus and recite Japji Sahib as we drive to the Golden Temple through the almost-empty streets in Amritsar. Once we arrive, we wait for the Seva leaders to recite the Ardass and then the work starts.

The Dance of the Buckets

The Parkarma Seva is a highly orchestrated group seva cleaning the Parkarma, marble pathway around the Sacred Pool of Nectar. This is also sometimes called the Ishnaan Seva - Just as we perform Ishnaan (a cold bath) to wake up our own bodies, this seva is the act of giving the temple its morning bath, cleansing the 'physical body' of the Harimandir Sahib while we awaken our own compassion through the work. Once the seva starts, it feels like a dance with different steps and coordination between three groups: The people in the water who fill the buckets, the people carrying the full buckets to the designated water-pourer, and the sweepers who come and brush the dirt away using the water. All of this is done on very slippery - and sometimes very cold - marble at 2 am. You have to be very alert, present and with a strong navel point for physical balance, and to be in the flow of the group and not fall. As we are dancing in this way, we are hearing the clinking sound of the buckets and behind that the early morning Kirtan being played inside the Golden Temple as we circle around it cleansing the marble floors and our own souls.

The beauty of it is to come back every day



and see the familiar faces of all the sevadars - everyone who participates is doing it from their heart. When we do this, we wash our own karma as well as our par-karma - shared karma - of the planet. It is like a group meditation to cleanse the subconscious of all humanity.



Bhakti... and its Heavenly Rewards

Day in, day out, MPA students wake up in the middle of the night to come and do this Seva. For a teenager, where sleep is precious, this poses an interesting challenge. By overcoming the challenge of sleepiness and the prejudices of the mind, we rise above all negativity and create the highest victory of the day. This is the heart of devotion and surrender - called bhakti in our path as Kundalini Yogis and Sikhs - the biggest transformation is to devote ourselves to a higher cause and to do that in the group consciousness.



After the MPA students have washed the floors, they will spend some time either meditating with the early morning kirtan listening to Asa Di Var (the early morning prayer of the Sikhs, like the "Sadhana" for Kundalini Yogis) or enjoy a well earned chai at the tea stand by the Akal Takhat. This little treat is a favourite of our students year round, especially in cold mornings, holding the warm, spiced cup to warm up your hands while breathing in the steam is pure heaven!

A Legacy of Devotion

Yogi Bhajan did this seva for 4.5 years in the early 60's when he was a young and proud yogi with siddhis (powers) over water, that he received by practicing yoga and meditation. The story goes like this. He was at a Gurdwara in a wedding and he saw clouds gathering which would ruin the celebrations. His siddhis - spiritual powers - were to control water, so as he looked at the clouds he sent them off. Everyone else kept enjoying the function and celebrating but an old man, a sevadar working at the shoe house sorting, guarding and cleaning the shoes of the sangat, saw what he had done. He came up to this proud yogi and told him he knew what he had done. The old man had deep wisdom who not many saw as he was just a humble servant at the shoe house. He told Yogi Bhajan he would have to clear his karma of misusing his siddhi by going back through all the 4,200,000 water incarnations.

At this time, he was working in Delhi and as soon as he understood what he had to do, he asked his superior to change his position to Amritsar. His request was granted and for the next 4.5 years, he came every morning at 1:30am to wash the marble floors around the Sarovar (Sacred Pool of Nectar) around the Golden Temple. He describes his experience here:

"What I am today didn't just happen right away. It took me four and a half years of washing the marble floors of the Golden Temple through a voluntary effort, through the grace of God and Guru. It was the act of mopping the floors of the Golden Temple which mopped all of the dirt out of me. It was nothing else. I could not



shine without that rub. The cub shall never rise to the maturity of radiance as a full lion without rubbing the marble floors of the Golden Temple. It is my experience, and I would like to share it with you. The Harimandir Sahib is the nucleus of a spiritually powerful center where the heavens and earth meet to bring harmony. It is not only in India. The Golden Temple is at two places, not just at one place. One is Located in the heart of the seeker, the Sikh, and the other is on the Earth in the City of Amritsar" - Yogi Bhajan, Khalsa Council, December 1987

From Cubs to Lions

Our students and staff at MPA commit to this seva every Saturday throughout the school year before entering the 40-day intensive. For a teenager, the natural urge to seek intensity and test their own limits is channeled here into a higher purpose. By choosing the cold marble and the discipline of the Amrit Vela over the comfort of sleep, they learn to direct their desire for "trials" toward self-mastery. It keeps them grounded and steady, proving to them every morning that they can conquer their own minds and meet any challenge with Chardi Kala.



Miri Piri Academy is an international boarding school in Amritsar, India, founded by the Siri Singh Sahib (Yogi Bhajan) in 1996. Serving students in Grades 5–12, along with adult continuing education programs, MPA combines academic excellence with spiritual development through the principles of Miri (temporal victory) and Piri (spiritual grace). Students engage in daily Kundalini Yoga, sports, Gatka martial arts, Kirtan, seva, regular visits to the Golden Temple, and educational travel throughout India. Learn more about MPA at miripiriacademy.org



FEELING THE CALL TO MAKE A RADICAL CHANGE

by Ishwara Kaur and Kirpal Singh

Following the Call to Live Differently

For several years, we had been feeling the call to make a radical change in our lives. When the opportunity came to move to the south west of France, we followed it — without fully knowing what would come next. The future was uncertain, but the direction felt clear, like young birds migrating for the first time.

After three years of living simply in a camper van, we arrived in Lourdes at the end of 2024. Situated at the entrance to the highest valley of the Pyrénées, Lourdes offers constant reminders of the presence and power of nature. The mountains draw the awareness inward. The healing waters that have made Lourdes a place of pilgrimage for generations begin high in these valleys, flowing through landscapes marked by silence, storms, and long memory.

For us, the move was not only practical. It was also part of an inner shift — a recognition that we wanted to live differently and create spaces centred around spiritual practice, nature, and sangat.

What Is an Ashram?

In the Kundalini Yoga tradition, the ashram has never simply been a place to stay. Traditionally, an ashram is a space where spiritual life becomes part of daily life: waking in the early hours for meditation, sharing meals, practicing together, serving together, and living in conscious relationship with one another. Ashrams are not meant to remove us from life, but to help us live with greater awareness, discipline, and connection.

For many people, especially in modern Europe, there are few opportunities to experience this kind of environment. Life moves quickly. Community is often fragmented. Nature is something we visit briefly rather than live alongside. Spiritual practice can easily become something private and isolated rather than something held collectively.

Over time, we began to feel the importance of helping to create spaces where people could step out of the usual rhythm of life and reconnect — with themselves, with nature, and with spiritual community.

Aguila: Listening to the Mountains

It was through a series of unexpected encounters in 2022 that we first arrived at Aguila in Héas, high in the mountains. The land immediately spoke to us through its stillness, wildness, and immense natural beauty. Ancient trees stood like quiet witnesses to the history of the valley. Although some of the buildings had been neglected for many years, the spirit of the place remained alive.

Two years later, we became guardians of the land.



Soon afterwards, major flooding in the valley destroyed the bridge leading to Aguila. In a strange way, this changed our understanding of what the land was asking of us. Rather than becoming a comfortable place to settle quickly, it remained remote, simple, and deeply connected to the elements. Reaching it still requires crossing the river by foot. In winter, it disappears beneath snow and silence.

Living close to nature in this way changes something in us. Without constant distraction and convenience, we begin to encounter ourselves differently. The mountains do not hurry us. The land asks for patience, humility, and presence.



Rebuilding Spaces for Sangat

At the same time, another space began to emerge in Lourdes itself — very different in atmosphere, yet connected in spirit. In the old part of the town, beneath the château and with mountain views, an old building slowly began its transformation into a shared spiritual home.

What matters to us is not the creation of another retreat centre or spiritual destination. More and more, we feel the need for places rooted in sincerity, simplicity, practice, and human connection. Places where sangat can gather not only for workshops or events, but to experience another way of living together.

The Kundalini Yoga community was originally built through these kinds of shared spaces. People practiced together, cooked together, served together, raised children together, and supported one another through the challenges of spiritual growth. Imperfect as these

communities sometimes were, they also carried an understanding that transformation does not happen only through teachings or techniques. It also happens through shared experience, shared responsibility, and shared presence.

Today, many people are searching for that sense of connection again.



A Different Rhythm of Life

In these changing and often disorienting times, places that encourage reflection, simplicity, and spiritual community feel increasingly important. Not as escapes from the world, but as spaces that help us return to life with greater clarity and steadiness.

The mountains of the Pyrénées have a way of softening the armour we carry. The mind becomes quieter. Something deeper begins to speak.

Perhaps this is one of the purposes of an ashram: not to offer answers, but to create the conditions where we can hear ourselves — and each other — more truthfully.

Ishwara and Kirpal Singh Khalsa are teachers, trainers, mentors, and co-founders of the International School of Sacred Living, Ik Saran Dhian. Their work draws on Kundalini Yoga, meditation, Number Intelligence (Karam Kriya), music, movement, and a deep connection with nature to explore the practical application of spiritual teachings in daily life.

Visit [here](#) to learn more about the ashram.



KHALSA CONSCIOUSNESS

Awareness, Courage, and Living in Alignment

by Sat Shakti Kaur

The Birth of the Khalsa

At this year's gathering of the European Khalsa Council, Shiv Charan Singh offered a presentation exploring the meaning and history of the Khalsa through Sikh teachings and the historic events of 1699, when Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa.

His talk revisited the story of Guru Gobind Singh calling for five volunteers willing to offer their heads in complete surrender to the Divine. The five who stepped forward became the Panj Pyare — the Five Beloved Ones — and the beginning of a spiritual nation grounded in courage, discipline, devotion, and service.

Shiv Charan Singh also reflected on the symbolism within that moment: the iron bowl and sword representing strength and warrior spirit, balanced by the sweetness added by Mata Sahib Kaur, remembered as the Mother of the Khalsa.



A Broader Reflection

From there, the conversation expanded into a broader reflection on what it means to live with Khalsa Consciousness today.

The gathering itself included sangat members who are deeply engaged with Sikh Dharma and yogic practice – especially those who have taken

Sikh vows, several Sikh ministers, Kundalini Yoga teacher trainers. Yet many of the themes explored in the conversation felt accessible far beyond that community.

The discussion approached Khalsa Consciousness less as an external identity and more as a state of awareness — a way of living with greater courage, humility, compassion, integrity, and connection to something beyond the individual self.

Several participants reflected that it is not necessary to identify as Sikh — or to have taken Sikh vows — in order to contemplate these qualities in one's own life. In much the same way that Christ Consciousness exists beyond Christianity, Khalsa Consciousness can also be considered as an orientation toward life: consciously, courageously, and with awareness of something greater than the individual self.

Awareness Over Perfection

Rather than remaining purely theological or historical, the conversation opened practical questions for reflection:

- *How do we respond under pressure?*
- *How do we confront ego honestly?*
- *How do we act with integrity?*
- *How do we remain connected to our common humanity, even in moments of conflict or division?*

In Sikh teachings, the “five thieves” — **lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego** — are understood as forces that pull human beings away from awareness and clarity. Shiv Charan Singh referenced this inner struggle throughout the presentation, emphasising that the first battle is within oneself before it is ever external.



This reframes the image of the warrior.

The Khalsa warrior is not simply someone who stands against injustice in the world, but someone willing to honestly confront their own reactions, fears, habits, and ego.

One participant reflected that Khalsa Consciousness does not require perfection — only awareness.

The point is not to become flawless, but conscious.

To notice when anger begins to take over.
To recognise attachment before it controls us.
To return to centre when we lose our balance.

That perspective grounded the conversation in something deeply human.

Khalsa Consciousness was not presented as an unreachable spiritual ideal reserved for extraordinary people, but as an ongoing practice of awareness within ordinary life.

Strength and Sweetness

For some, this awareness takes shape through meditation, prayer, seva, or disciplined spiritual practice. For others, it may emerge through acts of compassion, truthful living, courage under pressure, or learning to see beyond separation and fear.

The conversation also touched on the importance of compassion, shared humanity, and the ability to see beyond separation — recognising the sacredness and interconnectedness of life.

These are not exclusively Sikh questions. They are human ones.

The presentation itself included reflections on the meaning of the word Khalsa, often translated simply as “pure,” though Shiv Charan Singh explored deeper historical meanings connected to direct belonging to the sovereign — a life aligned directly with the Divine rather than controlled by ego, status, or external authority.

Yet even here, the discussion remained grounded in lived experience rather than abstract philosophy.

Participants reflected on practical questions:

- *How do we live more consciously?*
- *How do we hold strength and sweetness together?*
- *How do we remain connected to truth in daily life?*

A Living Practice

Following the gathering, the European Khalsa Council articulated its own statement on Khalsa Consciousness, describing it as “a universal, transcendent perspective that sees and serves God in all.”

Perhaps this is why the conversation resonated beyond the gathering itself.

Khalsa Consciousness was not presented as something distant or unattainable, but as a living practice — one that invites reflection from anyone seeking to move through life with greater awareness, courage, compassion, and connection.

Not perfection. But awareness.

Not separation. But unity.

Not spiritual performance. But the continual practice of returning to what is most true.

Shiv Charan Singh is the founder of the Karam Kriya School and a longtime Kundalini Yoga teacher and trainer. For more than four decades, he has taught internationally, integrating Kundalini Yoga, Sikh Dharma, and the contemplative study of consciousness and human relationships.

The European Khalsa Council brings together Sikh ministers, teachers, and community members from across Europe to explore topics related to Sikh Dharma, leadership, and service.

Written by Sat Shakti Kaur, Project Director for 3HO Europe.



Do you have a story, project, initiative, or experience you'd like to share?

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