

## Shamanic path and the use of plant medicines in relation to Kundalini Yoga (KY) as taught by Yogi Bhajan (YB)

### A prayer

*May we gather in the space of clarity where the truth of all ways converge  
May the Great Spirit guide us to see beyond the veil  
Just as the roots of the forest join all the species into one eco-system  
May compassionate understanding be felt as the roots that join our highest consciousness in unity  
May peace prevail in our hearts, our minds, our relationships, environments and on earth forever*

### Purpose of this document and some questions being addressed

Acknowledge and respect the common ground between the shamanic path and Kundalini Yoga.

What is the relationship between yoga and shamanic practices and beliefs?

How and where do these paths meet, or at least agree with each other, in a healthy manner?

Confirm that they are not antagonistic to one another.

But also, not necessarily complimentary at every level. i.e. the mix can have its dangers.

Can we walk the two paths in harmony? If so, then how?

Is a yogi a shaman? Is a shaman a yogi? If so, then how is it so?

Identify the distinctions, or differences, and portray the contrast between the two paths.

Where do these two paths differ and what are the implications?

Indicating the problems that arise in both paths when taken out of context.

How misunderstanding and naïve enthusiasm of the heart and soul can lead to alienation and disharmony.

What are the benefits and what are the cautions?

Clarify why the Regular use of addictive substances (drugs) and specific plant medicines is not compatible with the regular practice of Kundalini Yoga (KY).

Provide reference from Yogi Bhajan's (YB) teachings to confirm the position that a KY practitioner and teacher should take on the above questions.

Highlight the place of Community and the 'possible human' as the true meeting ground of all ways.

### Definitions

To answer some of the above questions, we must define shamanism and Yoga clearly as possible. What we will find is that both paths have natural wisdom, beauty, essence, spirit and integrity in them. Yet, in these times of change and spiritual awakening, there is equally much confusion and false representation of the two ways and their interaction with each other.

#### Definition of *shaman*- dictionary

**1:** a priest or priestess who uses magic for the purpose of curing the sick, divining the hidden, and controlling events.

#### First Known Use of *shaman* (Siberia)

1698, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

#### Definition of *yogi*

**1:** a person who practices yoga

**2 capitalized :** an adherent of Yoga philosophy

**3:** a markedly reflective or mystical person

<p><b>Definition of <i>shamanism</i></b>                  : a religion practiced by indigenous peoples of far northern Europe and Siberia that is characterized by belief in an unseen world of gods, demons, and ancestral spirits responsive only to the <u>shamans</u></p> <p>These definitions can be transferred to practices of the witch doctors, magicians, and healers of indigenous communities all over the world. For example in South America, Aborigines, as well as the animism and voodoo of Africa.</p>	<p><b>Definition of <i>yoga</i></b>  <b>1 <i>capitalized</i></b> : a Hindu theistic philosophy teaching the suppression of all activity of body, mind, and will in order that the self may realize its distinction from them and attain liberation</p> <p><b>2:</b> a system of physical postures, breathing techniques, and sometimes meditation derived from Yoga but often practiced independently especially in Western cultures to promote physical and emotional well-being</p>
--	---

In the simplistic table that follows it will seem that the contrast is between yoga and shamanism. However, it is equally a contrast between the orientation towards the higher world of spirit/s and the orientation towards the world of spirit/s in nature. Some of the rows show some common ground while other rows show the difference. The table also indicates some of the ways each path can be a trap.

Shaman	Yoga / Re-ligion
Prakirti. Kudrat. Shakti. The Creation	Pursha, Brahm. Shiva. The Creator
Mother nature. Feminine. Gaia. Pancha Mama	Father sky. Masculine. Gobind
Sargun. All matter. Creator is in Creation Horizontal	Nirgun. Formless Spirit. Creator beyond Creation. Vertical
Using the world. Calling on the Earth spirits	Calling on The Spirit. Sky, heavens.
Uses law of cause and effect for medicine or magic	Law of coming and going – dharma vehicle Cause and effect can be karma – be careful
I am one with the Earth	I am a spirit passing through the earth
Shaman oriented to the world The spirits which are nearby, animating everything.  Relating to the world for healing, guidance, health, balance, wisdom,	Yoga oriented towards the heavens, the afterlife. Dying to the world. Non-attachment. Unaffected by the world and its polarities. Relates to scripture for guidance. Though KY to walk in the world as spirit. Bring spirit to the world
Organic, plants Shamans immersed in nature Knowledge of the spirits of things	Ayurveda Yogis immersed in nature. Knowledge of elements. Tattwas, gunas,

Devoted and acquainted with nature. Skilled in use of natural outer world	Devoted and acquainted with spirit Skilled in controlling inner world; tattwas, etc.
Communicate with spirits Tends to be from lower/earthly realms i.e. of animals and plants	Communicating with spirits Of higher realms. Deities, angels, saints,
Playful, seductive Merged with Creation	Free, independent, austere Merging with the Creator
Sickness as an imbalance with nature and its spirits	Sickness as an imbalance within. The doshas, tattwas/elements, chakras, 10 spiritual bodies
Practiced by the shaman for the community. Shaman as priest, healer, magician.  Administered to others by the shaman on essential occasions (as needed) Not a daily practice Needs to be held in a sacred space And under guidance of the shaman	Yoga can be practiced by all  Daily practice is recommended  Can be practiced at home without a guide  You are your own healer – you must practice daily
The shaman lives apart from society	KY is for the householder
Spirit all around – may forget self as spirit attached to seeking spiritual experience	I am the spirit – forget the spirit all around
May generate dependence on the world Identification and attachments intensive farming....	Danger of disconnect from surroundings Detached rather than non-attached
Taking plant medicines out of context Without true guidance and lineage Without full immersion with nature. Without the lifestyle. Out of locality. Plant medicine parties and holidays.  The medicine grows where it belongs.	Yoga in yoga studios – then where is nature? Danger of seeing the world as something to avoid.  KY is not meant to be an abstraction from world. KY is the yoga of crystallization not sublimation KY is for the householder; We are here to bring spirit into the world
Reliance on specific external and remote substances to feel good, (even when natural) is to admit defeat, e.g. sugar, coffee, tobacco, ayahuasca, marijuana.	Attached to transcendent experience Spiritual is to be out there, spaced out,
Shamanic traditions associated with a place (space), ecosystem, lineage, harmony, culture. Some teachings can be extracted and adapted to other environments but something will be lost, specially the safety, integrity, sacredness of the system.	Lost in making pilgrimages cleansing baths and rituals projecting God up in sky/heaven or in deities (and no longer in self)
Buy a drum, a rattle, collect some feathers, burn some herbs and make noises while dancing round a fire.....	Buy a yoga mat, nice music, incense, candle and follow the DVD....

The soul is not sick but the body-mind goes out of balance within itself and in relation to the natural physical, emotional, social, psycho-magnetic and spiritual environment. Therefore, there is medicine of multiple types to address the imbalances. The Shamans and the yogis both propose to offer natural and magical ways to resolve the disharmony and to reharmonize, with the earth, nature, the spirits, the gods and God.

Shamans and Yogis study, learn from, and obey the laws and wisdom of nature.

They both intend the best outcome for the human being. Health, prosperity, awakening, connection, unity, etc. And the human being in community is the bridge/connection between all worlds.

We can even say that ceremony is a kriya and kriya is a ceremony.

Both are designed to align micro and macro systems, and the inner and outer worlds/realms.

Yet when kriya and ceremony are not well conducted and fully respected this leads to degradation of the human being.

Many of the main shamanic traditions across the world have several factors in common. The Shaman sees the Divine all around in the natural world and deeply interacts and relates to It, thus finding guidance and inspiration.

The engagement with and the use of external forces is one of the main factors. Whether that be through calling on spirits of animals, plants, ancestors, the elements.

The Shamanic practice therefore includes a number of supporting rituals, ceremonies, and the use of other exterior agents such as the medicine man and the medicine plants, along with natural or man-made objects.

KY also recognises the creation as the body of the Creator and reminds us that *'if you can't see God in all then you can't see God at all.'* YB. However, its primary tool, or instrument, is the body-mind system.

Working with diet, postures, breath practices, internal focus or visualisations, and the chanting of mantras.

Modern western yogis need earthing and to relate more to the circularity of life through nature.

Modern western shamans need geometry, verticality, discipline, which yoga can offer.

Both need a broader perspective about nature, self and life in general.

Both need a lot more meditation to cultivate the possible human. (SadhanaSangat, Seva, Simran, Sacrifice).

If you want to experience the truth about (Kundalini) Yoga. Then you leave aside other things which will alter your direct experience and fully immerse yourself in the practice, philosophy and associated lifestyle.

If you really want to have the shaman experience. Then leave aside practices which are not originating from those indigenous communities and fully immerse yourself in the natural world and all the practices and ceremonies that go with it.

### **Nature, Mother Nature; the medicine and poison She provides:**

Human is not inadequate. Food and medicine, in the form of all parts of plants are all around the garden of Eden where we have been placed. We are meant to know our neighbours of the different planes of existence and enjoy their interaction with us.

Human is endowed with all god's qualities, i.e. not a victim, limited, incapable, dependent on any one external substance, element, or person to feel and exercise goodness and majesty.

All elements - earth, water, air, fire and ether - as in stone, rivers, weather, plants and animals can provide information and connection. Along with the time cycles of the breath, the day and night, the moon, the seasons, the planets, and more.

All plants are medicinal and sacred like all races and all species. Yes with the combination of urbanization, industrialization, materialism, the oppression of women and religions that end to emphasize a God that is only a transcendent and distant male being, we have lost our innate acquaintance with Nature; with the wisdom which plants surround us reveal and the gifts they provide. This limitation is a handicap of our culture and the source of feelings such as alienation and disconnection. Consequently, the results a desperate search for connection and a wide variety of methods to either numb that longing or give it quick fixes (temporary satisfaction).

Furthermore we consume a minute percentage of what is edible around us.

In ecological, macrobiotic and ayurvedic terms (to mention just a few examples of well-known sciences) what is local and seasonal is what will sustain the creatures (including humans) of anyone place. And every plant there could be a medicine to one person and a poison to another.

It is a matter of identifying the right potency, method, and frequency of use of plants according to the condition of the individual.

There is no argument or line of thinking that can become a standard prescription for all. In Ayurveda there is an assessment of the individual constitution and circumstance and then the appropriate guidelines are given for diet and the use of any specific herbs.

We are not of the earth. We are passing through, a guest. We are grateful to Nature and we treat It/Her with due respect. We are spirits here for the human experience. And this is most fully realised by our engagement with other human beings. Open, honest, present, without being distorted by the misuse of any substances. The heart itself, and human community is the optimum bridge between heaven and earth.

It is not authentic to only call some plants medicine when in fact all plants are medicine.

It is not authentic to only call some plants sacred when in fact all plants are sacred.

It is not authentic to call some plants magical when in fact all of nature is magical.

And being sacred, magical and medicinal plants should be treated with respect and care.

This world, of earth, water, fire, air, and all its plant and animal species is not imaginary. To call it so is an insult to the Creator. But it is also a temporary location of our spirit. When we die our body will return to the earth while our spirit will return to spirit. In other words earth is not a place to over identify with and thus become attached to. Simply respect and enjoy and leave the earth a better place.

### **The spirits of plants:**

Every type of plant has its associated spirit and innate and unique properties which dictate an outcome.

The effect of taking in any plant substance depends on whether we take the right plant in the right dose and method. Otherwise there are 3 main categories of failure – too much, too little or the wrong kind of medicine. When it is too much or the wrong kind then there can be serious consequences.

Some plant spirits, in high concentrations, once in our system, can fully occupy and take over our space. In this manner our own self-connection undergoes serious interference.

In such cases the spirit of the plant lives its own life and purpose in us. It is a kind of invasion or possession. Like a parasite that no longer lives in a harmonious symbiosis but crosses a boundary that becomes detrimental rather than healing or helpful.

When the spirits of certain plants have a free reign in the territory of the human mind-body space a number of extra-ordinary phenomena may occur. For example:

- radical changes in perception of your sense of self and your spirit in the past, present and the future.
- extra-sensory perception through voices, visions, sensations, of which may be more distorted or clearer versions of underlying and over-arching realities.
- cut off from the everyday actuality. Disassociation.
- displacement. Out of body experience.
- the physical, emotional, and/or psychological desire to reuse the substance in order to repeat the experience.
- a change in balance of the mind-body system for better or worse.
- extreme levels of stimulation/excitation or sedation/passivity.
- addiction to the substance, and its associated spirit, as well as to the rituals and sensations that accompany its use.

In such cases the spirit of the plant finds a new level of its own fulfilment that is only possible through human ingestion of the substance. The impression will be that the plant's innate impulse to self-perpetuate imposes on us the desire to continue using it. You will be convinced of the need to revisit the experience and associated perception shift. You are also likely to be convinced that the best, or only, way to do that is by ingesting the plant again. In this way you become a slave to the spirit of the plant. It will take on the form of a divine entity that you will call sacred and spiritual. You will want to convince others to do the same.

When you take anything that will make alteration to your mind and senses, even though it may open other doors of perception, there are certain factors to consider.

- it remains difficult to know if it's an illusion or a greater reality.
- At that time, you are not in command of your own perception.
- You are subject to the changed perception given by the use of the substance.
- you are changing through exterior means and not from within by your own inner effort.
- you are accessing realms that you may not be physically, emotionally and psychologically prepared for.
- your nervous system is being stressed (KY is to strengthen the nervous system).  
And stress on the nervous system will ultimately become a stress on the psyche - leading to breakdown.
- in breaking down barriers of the (super) ego you may also dismantle the healthy ego sense of self. There is a need to have relatively stable basic sense of identity that will survive the deconstruction of imprisoning boundaries of self.
- alternatively the semi-enlightened states can be used to build the spiritual version of the super-ego as a compensation for the gradual breakdown of the day to day functional ego personality.

There is the challenge that once you have had any realisation given through the use of the plant then how will you sustain that perception. Because you did not reach that state by your own personal efforts then the state cannot be fully claimed, owned, or integrated by you.

## **Kundalini Yoga**

Such approaches to higher experience is not compatible with the approach of KY in any way.

In KY spirituality is not about talking to spirits or having spirits talk to you. Nor is it about leaving the body to go up into other so-called spiritual dimensions. It is about embodiment of Spirit in everyday life. Incarnate and crystalize your own spirit. Instead of 'getting high', you become your Higher Self.

KY is a practice through which you-within-you create your own experience with your own practice. It does not require the use of any external plant agent. KY is **not** a practice through which you go out of your own body, mind and heart space to let another spirit in. KY is oriented for you to incarnate your own spirit. KY is self-initiation. You are not going to be initiated by a plant. You are not going to be in communion with the spirit of any plant. You are going to become your own spirit.

Kundalini Yoga awakes us to the understanding and experience that we are spirits here for the human experience. Living in the social, communal, every-day world of actuality. While practicing remembrance of the fact that we are just passing through and this is not our original home nor final resting place.

However, living in the density of a physical body in the mediums of time and space, longitude and latitude, also known as Maya, results in a distortion to our perception of reality. Both who we really are and the nature of the reality inherent in the creation. The illusion of separation, the illusion that what we see is all there is, and the illusion of permanence.

The correct practice of Kundalini Yoga is to ground you in your heart; in your own being. Not to ground you upon the Earth. And, in this way, you cultivate a sensitivity and intuitive awareness that allows you to apply your intelligence and critical discernment to the choices you make. That would make it possible to live a life full of a sense and attitude, of sacredness, magic and healing. You will come to know the true nature of what the Earth with all its species can offer you, and what you have to offer back.

### **Kundalini Yoga and the regular use of so-called magical plant medicine**

What do the teachings say about mixing KY practices and the regular use of various 'sacred', psychotropic, (mind and mood altering), plant medicines.

Whatever can do for you what you cannot do for your self is likely to produce dependence on physical, emotional, mental, spiritual level.

There is no need to use exterior, organic agents to reach the highest states of consciousness; as described by mystics and yogis throughout the ages.

It is not the purpose here to question the medicinal value of plants. It is not the purpose here to reject the general wisdom in the diversity of shamanic practices globally. Nor to deny or reject any claims people make for how a one-time experience of plant medicine may have contributed to their journey, and even led them to find KY.

With deep meditation and healthy lifestyle you will have a pure and enriched sensory system and fully awakened intuition. Then you will know every stone, plant, animal, colour, geometrical form, all of it. You'll know what it is, what's its purpose, how to relate to it, how it can be medicine or poison. And then you can match what's happening in yourself or another person, where is disharmony, which colour, rock... etc can work on that person. And you can understand this. Is a lot of work but you can get there.

However, regular, ongoing, ingestion of psychotropic plants (i.e. so-called sacred plant medicine, which is a very small aspect of the full and true definition of Shamanism) is not compatible or recommended. It is certainly not recommended for all people. Its regular use does not combine well, but rather conflicts, with a regular practice of (Kundalini) Yoga.

There is a conflict: If you are doing a practice of KY and taking mind and mood altering substances then there is conflict of direction. If you are taking herbs to go out, with your spirit, and letting the other spirit in and doing KY to incarnate your spirit, there is a conflict. These two approaches are absolutely not compatible. Mixing KY with practices that interfere with your own self-initiatory journey may produce some very

disastrous effects. Like mental distress, confusion, social dysfunction as well as pragmatic dysfunction in everyday life matters.

In addition, there may develop a tendency to become an agent for the spirit of the substance. A pusher and a preacher. Let's not be of any illusion. As this can happen with KY and other traditions as well. And teachers end up becoming fanatics and also preachers. Yogi Bhanjan made it very clear that he was committed to train teachers and that they should not become preachers.

The most common plant medicine referred to in the current media are Peyote, Ayahuasca and certain mushrooms (tobacco is also commonly used). In a contained context and with right preparation of the individual, along with guidance of a true shaman, these plants have served some people towards some levels of cleansing, awakening and realisation.

Like Kundalini Yoga however, Shamanism is also a whole philosophy and way of life.

In both cases, KY and Shamanism, the priority is that one's whole way of thinking, relating, communicating and lifestyle reflect and acknowledge the Sacred (The Spirit) in the whole environment and throughout one's life.

A modern trend in the spiritual consumeristic marketplace of Shamanism has come to put a lot of emphasis on the use of plants out of context of its entire system. This is a mockery and abuse of the integrity of the true Shamanic path. (in the same way that yoga tends to be taken out of context of its spiritual base)

Every plant has its own spirit and some have very strong spirits. By taking that plant you are allowing that spirit to enter you. For a time you will be displaced from your normal seat within yourself.

Each spirit, deva, (Druja, Druka, = Drug) has its own intention, agenda, message, offering, to bring to the one who ingests the associated plant. That is why herbal medicines have been known and used with caution, under right guidance, all across the planet for thousands of years.

### **The responsibility of the teacher of Kundalini Yoga as taught given by Yogi Bhanjan**

The teachings of KY as taught by YB clearly warn about the dangers of using marijuana, cocaine, heroin or alcohol associated with the practice of KY. So by extension, the intentional use of any mind and mood altering substance should also be questioned. (*see references in appendix*)

This is stated independently of the special claims made for any specific plant. Rather it is about the general discordant approaches, and possible effects that mixing such practices can create.

Regular use of mind-altering substances, sometimes referred to as Shamanic practices, and Kundalini Yoga are two distinct paths and lineages. Even if it is claimed that they have the same objective, they should not be confused with each other. No matter how much they have in common their potential for merging is highly unlikely.

Therefore, it is the duty of KY teachers both in their classes and in their private life to maintain a clear path and not confuse, the teachings, nor mislead the students, of KY.

More on the use of exterior agents: Kundalini Yoga is a practice of spiritual technology whereby practitioners create their experience through their own efforts. It is based on the concept of self-initiation and non-dependence on the ingestion of an exterior agent.

While the KY teacher can be considered as an exterior agent, s/he shall not be ingested. Rather the teachings are ingested, especially through practice. In KY the teacher is serving the students towards their independence. The teacher transmits the teachings (right understanding and practical technology) and the student practices and enjoys the benefits.



The aim is to achieve realisation of self and its unity with the macro-self. (A merger of self-realisation and God-realisation. YB) The teachings clearly imply this is done by committed discipline of body, breath, speech, and mind, and without the necessity of using any special exterior plant to aid that process. A simple light and balanced vegetarian diet is all that is recommended. The emphasis is more on restraint and reduction of our consumeristic tendencies, rather than affirming the necessity of any particular exterior (plant) agent. The result being an inner alchemy produced by personal effort. Not a chemistry produced by ingestion of substances.

In KY, you are encouraged to breathe with the mantra of Sat Naam (in the name of your true identity). Become you, don't be busy with other spirits. KY serves you to conquer and use the mind, not to destroy it. The results of a wholistic and nature friendly lifestyle combined with KY will be that the doors of perception will open to the extent that your nervous system and true self-identity can deal with it.

Yogi Bhajan has been quoted as saying that Kundalini Yoga is a complete and comprehensive teaching and lifestyle; likened to an egg – complete in itself. Implying that there is nothing to add or to be taken away.

### **Additional reflections**

Enlightenment is not liberation: It is important to appreciate the benefits of the insights given through various practices. While also important to distinguish between enlightenment and liberation. Everyone will have moments of profound insight through all kinds means and circumstances. Yet this does not guarantee to set us free from the karmic cycle of reincarnation. Hence it is said that enlightenment is not liberation. It can even happen that enlightened visions and realisations become traps in themselves. For example, boosting the super-ego sense of self-importance, or attachment to relive the experience.

Laws of nature and guiding principles: Nature has her laws and we can learn from them.

Nature through our 5 senses gives us experience. We can learn from experience.

Nature's laws teach us how to live well and healthy while on the earth. When we harmonise with nature we live a life of harmony.

It is said that in the Aquarian age our teacher is our experience. Therefore, we chase experience. But we are not always able to be clear about what our experience is teaching us.

As much as we are strong spirits, we are also fragile, vulnerable, naïve, ignorant and susceptible to hypnosis and delusion. Which may be further complicated by our personal karmas, life stories, traumas, social indoctrination, planetary forces, etc.

Our interpretation of our own experience may be quite distorted. Exterior interventions can make a difference to further confuse or clarify what our experience is teaching us. For that we need a reference beyond the laws of nature. We might call that a set of guiding principles. That is why there are various bodies of teachings that offer wisdom teachings to serve us to better comprehend our experiences. Each individual is on their own path to identify the principles they accept as guides for their right understanding and way of life.

### Changing our state:

It is natural to want to be able to change our state of awareness and our state of experience at any given time. Hence the market place is full of a wide range of methodologies, technologies, entertainments, packages, as well as substances (chemical or plant based) through which we can escape, go beyond, from current actual mind/mood/body state and generate another.

Our tendencies, and choices of method, may be based on any of the following factors:

- Curiosity.
- Entertainment.
- Seeking healing from current sickness, (addictions and other).
- Desire to stimulate the pineal gland to release hormones etc.
- A feeling of emptiness and longing; to be filled, to belong.
- Desire for intimacy.
- Seeking new experience and accompanying insight, (opening up inner vision, 3<sup>rd</sup> eye)
- Avoiding or escaping current experience, (aversion), from some level of pain or suffering.
- Fear of facing the moment as it is.
- Belief that one needs this to face the life, the world and the self.
- Attachment and dependence on the method or substance, (craving).
- Impatience to reach altered state now.
- Chasing a repetition of experience we had on the first time we tried something.
- Belief and conviction of the superiority of what the method or experience brings.
- Desire to reach the truth, the enlightenment, the liberation from karma, the state of cosmic consciousness and unconditional love and bliss. Self-realisation and God-realisation

Much of this is nothing more than a play of electro-chemical forces and the resulting changes in our sense of self through the body-brain, which can be achieved by more than one means. The means for changing our state depend upon and relate to the element and associated emotion we most identify with in our mental personality. For example, imbalances and over attachment to, or identification with, the following elements:

- Earth, mineral plane, first chakra, smell. we might use heavy foods, sleep, sedatives, or stimulants like cocaine. Medicines like homeopathy, rest, walking on the earth.

The totem is rocks, stones, crystals, mountains and associated spirits.

- Water, organic realm, second chakra, taste. We might use organic substances, sex, alcohol.

Medicine of herbs, naturopathy, Ayurveda, Chinese medicine.

The totem we bow to is the plants, the trees and associated spirits.

- Fire, animal kingdom, third chakra, sight. Attached to Sports, self-image, or procrastination and fantasy.

Medicine of animal therapy, healthy exercise, rituals and ceremonies.

The totem, deity, alter, we salute is the animal forms and associated spirits.

- Air, human domain, fourth chakra, touch.

Addicted to, or medicine of, pain, tranquilizers, love, hugs, music, dance, breath.

The totem or reference for our spiritual projection is the human.

This can be the idol worship of a spiritual ego.

or the inspiration of the saints and masters of the ages

- Aether, angelic, fifth chakra, sound. Medicine of mantra and japa (repetition).

The alter of the word. Worship of scripture, singing holy hymns, the name of God...

From the above approximate and short account of the elements and associated medicine it is clear that the highest medicine is sound itself. As 'in the beginning was the word and word was God'. We are all echoes of the word on its return journey. We will revisit this point later.

Self-created V achieved though external agent:

Let's assume we want to reach the truth, the enlightenment, the liberation from karma, the state of cosmic consciousness and unconditional love and bliss.

We can indeed achieve these qualities and it is simply wiser/safer to do so with minimum interference and support from outside props. These may include:

- Exterior props for asanas. And the use of various (gym) machines for keep fit activities.
- Ingestion of substances beyond that needed for basic survival and good health.
- Dependence on the places designated as special, sacred, magical, etc. Pilgrimage.
- Dependence on person, teacher; to do anything more than guide to yourself.

Any of these may be argued as legitimate under all kinds of circumstances and contexts.

But the way to the human heart is simple and not dependent upon, nor guaranteed by these. Some examples are:

Being in saintly company / service to humanity / singing songs of praise / deeply sincere prayer / loving repetition of a name of God with every breath. It is the human that awakens and heals the human.

The achievements and possibilities claimed for and associated with the use of extra-ordinary plants are not different from what can be achieved by the practice of (kundalini) yoga, meditation, and a wide variety of other systems or methods. Achievements such as to connect with one's own nature, to know your place in the whole, to cleanse and heal old stories, to have a greater vision and connect with your soul's purpose, to see deeply into the matrix, to be one with The One, etc.

A butterfly opens from the inside out. The soul's awakening, to be true and genuine, must also come from a gradual maturing from within. Not by excessive intrusion, invasion and interference from the outside.

The teachings and practice of KY encourages the development towards self-realisation through personal practice, and self-discipline, slowly and steadily, towards an inner strength and inner awareness, along with an inner peace that is created and maintained by one's own means, with minimum or no extraordinary external props including substances.

Remember, as said earlier, that any exterior agent that activates an experience that you cannot do for your self is likely to produce dependence on one level or another; physical, emotional, mental, spiritual.

Some people may benefit from the door being opened from the outside. But then will face the challenge to now initiate and maintain that by one's own efforts.

The occasional and guided use of 'special' substances/plants may be beneficial to some people. It would be wise if there was a screening process to assess the suitability of the individual for that kind of medicine.

Thereafter one should be challenged to integrate the insights, changes, new perspective, into their daily life.

Whereas weekly or monthly parties based around the use of 'special' herbs and substances is another thing altogether. i.e. just a party like any other.

We may ask what has changed in the world since the mass uptake of people using such 'special' herbs. Apart from more crime. More lies, more cheating, more deaths, more madness and more people in hospital, or homeless on the streets. People are dying from misuse of substances, not with the misuse of Yoga.

Those who end up destabilised and mentally distressed from inappropriate substance use may spend years in recovery. Years that could have been spent in gradual discovery. A natural maturing and ripening.

The realm of spiritual Maya on Earth is filled with voodoo yogis, pseudo shamans, would-be healers, fake gurus, and semi-enlightened nomads searching for their lost tribes. Trance states are a poor substitute for the truly awakened state but none the less are far more popular. Cacao ceremonies are seemingly innocent yet provide a gateway to the Amazonian hippie trail.

KY is self-emancipation, self-initiation and self-realisation.

Self-realisation can be obtained without the need of certain so called special or sacred, exterior plant based substances. While accepting that many do not have the discipline or the possibility to break through their subconscious barriers without significant assistance.

Therefore some people will use certain plants, cleansing diets, pilgrimages to consecrated places, combine rituals and music of certain types, go for gong baths, be on the passive and receptive end of a wide range of healing modalities. While others may enjoy and gain from the support of a community and the guidance of a teacher. And it is all fine. Each one finds their path.....

### **References from Yogi Bhajan on Nature, use of substances, shamanism**

Since this article is also written for regular practitioners and teachers of Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan. Then it follows that we should make some references to what YB taught in relation to the main topics covered.

*Note: these and many other references on the topic can be found online at:*

<https://www.libraryofteachings.com>

#### YB on nature

As yoga tends to focus more on The One Spirit and is often associated to renunciation of nature and non-attachment to things of the earth. Then it is useful to remember that nature is important in many respects. Here are a few references from YB.

*If you are not concerned with the earth, you are not concerned with the heavens—there is no balance. Your power lies in your prosperity and prosperity lies in your feelings—feeling the earth. When you pass by a tree, a tree cries or laughs. When you walk by a plant, either it will move or not. The plants will show movement if you are a good person. If you are not a good person, plants will be uptight and straight. A dog will look to you if it is in a good mood, otherwise its head will go sideways. Every living thing reacts and acts with you. Be aware of it. Aug 14, 2000*

*God gave you eyes to see Him and ears to hear His Totality—the leaves, their growth, the wind and lightning. If you start realizing the sounds of nature, you can realize the Shabd Guru. Life is a universal nature of self on which you have to expand, being huge and vast! August 21st, 2001*

*Old age comes upon us automatically. But if your shushmana is alive, your sensory system will survive. And this sensory system is so powerful that it can pick up strength from everywhere—from trees, from grass, from stones. You have a most ultra-modern manufactured system in you. When you realize it, and you know that you are going to die, you can die when you want to. May 12th, 2001*

*It is the first sign of a saint, he smiles at the misery, he smiles at the happiness, he is happy, because he feels if Mother Nature is doing something, his dad is ordering it, why should he bother. That's the same thing, mother is his nature and nature is his mother, why should he fear for anything? What is happening is he is seeing it. Mother is cooking, mother is polishing, mother is varnishing, mother is coming, going, it's all Mother Nature. Feb 9, 1969*

*This is a perfect organization. The beauty of this nature around us is it has created a tremendous variety, variety is so well established there are not two things produced on this universe. No two things agree at all, if that does not surprise you there is nothing else which can surprise you. No two human beings, no two minds, look into this world, no two plants. There is nothing produced on this planet, in this universe, in the entire nature which is alike, nothing, but still everything is organized, everything in this universe has rhythm, organization and time schedule, that is where man finds difficulties, man disobey organization, rhythm and time schedule. Moment a man disobeys rhythm, time schedule and organization he is at war with the surrounding nature and that is going to mess him up, Oct 10, 73*

*When you obey the law of Mother Nature, Mother Nature shall obey you. When you obey the law of Divinity, law of Divinity will obey you. July 4, 78*

*Mother Nature and Godfather are two very odd things. But to reach the God Father, you have to go through this Mother Nature and Mother Nature no mercy, God total mercy.*

*.... Because this universe, this Earth is governed by the nature and Mother Nature is identity in it self, God Father comes later.*

*.... God is with you and you will get away from God, you have never understood or read ever Mother Nature will forgive you or you will get away from it and even this much you can't learn, remember in life. Man can be forgiven by God, I promise you, he can be forgiven without even prayer, I promise you, God is merciful, I promise you but Mother Nature is not merciful at all. Her law is, so shall you reap, as so shall you sow. She is the in charge of the karma, He is the in charge of the Infinity it is the union of Infinity and karma at one place, where you have a chance. Feb 13, 85*

*you do everything to disobey the law of nature and God does everything to let you know that you have to obey the law of nature, so there is a conflict between you and Mother Nature. May 21, 85*

*Mother Nature spares nothing. Therefore we say, so shall we sow, so shall we reap, if we do not sow right, we will weep, and if you keep on repeating it, you will become creep, so please understand the law. Aug 5, 91*

*Guru Nanak in Asadevar, he is singing of nature, he had love of God and he has love of man and he has love of that Mother Nature you know.*

*.... So when I come to Espanola, I found it is the same locale, same (?) time in which Guru Nanak he has sang Asa di var, addressing to Mother Nature. Whatever we see as a nature, whatever we hear, listen, is nature. This water belongs to nature, air belongs to nature, fire belongs to nature, this Earth belongs to nature, so beautifully he has given this shabada and I feel, I don't feel this inspiration in Amritsar, you will excuse me since, thou that is a feet of Sikh religion now. Sept, 1, 96*

### YB on use of substances

It has been made quite clear above that the mix of regular practice of KY and the use of mind and mood altering substance, especially if they either addictive, or psychotropic (creating major shifts in mental perspective), is not recommended and most likely to generate internal conflict in the long run. Here are some further comments from YB.

*"If you have to be addicted to something, be addicted to doing sadhana daily. Otherwise, addiction is not a source of freedom. And you are not free by taking drugs. The neurons of the brain will become feeble (débil) You will lose your nostril pituitary sensitivity. You can never smell the subtlety of life. You'll always be dragging your life." –Yogi Bhajan, Kundalini Yoga: The Flow of Eternal Power, p. 104*

*“Let there be no misunderstanding. As yogis, we have no idea or inclination to use drugs. Drugs are the worst thing on the planet. The non-clinical use of drugs is destructive to both mind and body. We have never supported drugs and will not support them now or at any time in the future. This has to be very clearly understood. We cannot lead anyone who seeks these teachings into a path of destruction, which is the only path of drugs. Our reality is a God-conscious reality of happiness, health and prosperity which leaves no room for the destruction of the self-caused by the use of drugs. It is our policy to exalt the self.” ~Yogi Bhajan, April 27, 1994*

*“Marijuana has only one use. When you have stomach ulcer and you have inner lining problem, you can take the green marijuana juice and you can drink it with certain other things as recipe. And today even in India they use it as medicine, nobody smokes it and those who smoke it, everybody blesses them. Now think of the Egypt, now I am coming nearer to you.*

*Egypt had a great civilization, desert peyote, unluckily they found. You know what a slaughter Persians did with them? Once they got tired of war. So there was a lull, they were not supposed to fight two days. So they took their peyote and they got into ecstasy, unfortunately Persians didn't obey the rule. They attacked. Slaughtered the entire civilization. Now let's come home nearer. Rome. Alcohol took that empire and drowned it “ YB sept 13, 1992*

*You know, about drugs, there was a great, once upon a time the man raised his consciousness and became perfect and created a most beautiful civilization on the planet earth, we call it Chinese civilization and it became so prosperous. Man became so smooth and beautiful. There was so much comfort, so much knowledge. Opium appeared and took that entire civilization through the drains. Chinese civilization was lost because of opium. Then the man again re-progressed and in the continent of India the man technologically, mentally, spiritually physically it was known as golden sparrow and people used to think about it as the richest land where the rivers of milk flow and peace prevails and garden of Eden if at all existed it was existed in that land. That civilization progressed better than any civilization and produced such a peace to the heart of man that man was overjoyed but marihuana came and took it through the drain and put it in such bonds of slavery that, that humanity and that civilization is still paying the karma of that. Then man progressed again and we have in history a civilization known as Egyptian civilization, they progressed technologically, astronomically, psychologically and in many other theories of life they mastered themselves but peyote took them through the drain too. Then we have a civilization, we call it Roman civilization, it was a great civilization of nature, power, (?) splendour, grace, rule, unity of the man and it created a great empire. Orgies of sex and booze took it through the drain. And we in America are practicing all together. If God saves us it will be a miracle of Almighty God on the planet earth in any person and personality. Bless you. .... YB Dec 28, 1973*

#### YB on Peyote:

*It took down the great Egyptian empire, They rubbed their nose and lost track of everything, They lost their root, and all their force due to peyote. It created a hell for them.*

*- it takes 11 years to get out of peyote*

*- “Purpose of life is not to hassle and go out and get drunk and take peyote and those stuff to get high and find God..... Outside help is no good, inside hassle is no good, just relax and just say ‘i am, i am in God”*

*- taking peyote you will never know when the sun rises and when it sets. it costs too much to be insane.” June 14 1989*

The argument being that Peyote is a cactus plant from Mexico and nowhere else.

Yet a little research on-line will reveal some interesting facts. Such as the existence of African Peyote Cactus. Note that in some of YB's references he does state 'desert peyote'.

### **African Peyote Cactus:**

So Yogi Bhanan was not incorrect to imply that people from the North African continent would have had access to some form of Peyote Cactus. See the following website as an example:

<https://saharadesertproject1.weebly.com/plants.html>

There you will find the following quote: " Native Saharan tribes use peyote from this plant in their spiritual rituals."

The Egyptian Civilisation had a wide reach during its peak. So they would have known about and easily had access to this cactus.

Now whether YB had done historical research or accessed akashic records we do not know. But clearly we can see that someone has an agenda to push their own ideas about a particular plant medicine and then seeks any means, and lines, of attack or argument to defend and preach a particular view while not actually knowing the facts themselves.

### ***"Rubbing their nose..."***

Now whether they rubbed their nose in it or not is a minor detail. Which could possible have its own material or symbolic meaning.

The main point of the true yogis is that the only thing to rub your nose in is your own breath.

### **The question of nutmeg**

Some Kundalini yoga practitioners may recall that Yogi Bhanan gave some recipes for the use of nutmeg. And since there is such a thing as a 'nutmeg high' then we need to ask whether this means that YB was encouraging the use of substances to alter our state. There are three things to comment on this topic.

First is that nutmeg is a legal and natural nut which has a lot of known medicinal properties. In general the health properties of nutmeg include: anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, helps digestion, reduce gas and diarrhoea, calming – good for sleep, improve mood (anti-depressant), control blood sugar and high blood pressure – therefore good for the heart, has been used to treat cancer and kidney disease.

In excess, which means over 3 teaspoons, it will produce hallucinations and is potentially deadly.

Second is in relation to an interesting approach in responding to addiction. Early accounts the use of nutmeg in the 1960's suggest that it was considered a substitute for heroin high or an LSD trip. One of the strategies to help people get free of addiction to harmful drugs is to find other ways to create a similar experience. By being able to create the similar stimulating or sedating effect the user would have a greater chance of becoming free of the need for the other addictive and potentially harmful substance.

there is no evidence or reference to suggest that YB was speaking of, or recommending, the use of nutmeg in this context. Ultimately, as discussed in this article, the practice of KY is makes it possible to create altered states through one's own personal practice, such as pranayama breathing exercises, chanting mantras, prayer and devotion, intense focus on different areas of the body – especially the 3<sup>rd</sup> eye.

Thirdly while Yogi Bhanan did give some remedial recipes for the use of nutmeg, he also was very clear about the precautions. Here are a few references:

*in case of a tremendous high blood pressure, tremendous high blood pressure, tremendous high blood pressure, one grounded nutmeg, with yogurt can give you lot of relief, but you must be warned, you must not use more than one nutmeg under any circumstances, otherwise you will start hallucinating, and it does have a side effect, it makes a person temporarily impotent. YB Nov 15 1975*

*Everybody knows that nutmeg breaks the stones in the body it is used as a ayurvedic medicine. It relaxes the body into tissues but overuse of that is highly, highly unwanted and harmful. YB Nov 6 1990*

*Hey when you guys go tonight take four full nutmeg, you know full, and take skim milk and boil them in that, don't you break them. ... If you break them you are responsible, you are committing suicide, that's not what I am saying. YB Jan 5 1995*

*If you are very tired and you have a terrible problem with yourself, quarter teaspoon of nutmeg and quarter teaspoon of cardamom put together with a warm milk can put you to a very good sleep and next morning you can be very light. Try it. It's very light. And feel no fatigue at all. But they have to be absolutely quarter spoon, teaspoon. Not heap full and sometime you go crazy things, I don't know why you do those. YB Mar 22 1995*

### Some yogis used marijuana

There is certainly evidence that there are and were sects of yogis that took mind and mood altering substances. In particular marijuana. And if you go to certain part of India today you will find many would-be yogis and sadhus basically addicted to the substance.

However, the most profound spiritual texts, produced from the greatest mystics of India and other traditions, clearly show that they fully experienced all that any plant can reveal and so much more without the use, or need, of any exterior agent. Their own meditation along with God's grace was quite enough. There is plenty of research showing the multiple benefits of meditation and its chemical effects. And there are many accounts of great saints and yogis who achieved the highest states of consciousness through meditation, prayer and bhakti.

This is not to deny the benefits of proper medicinal use and application of marijuana.

Some Sikhs also highly value the regular use of marijuana. Yet there is a clear reference in the Sir Guru Granth Sahib that clearly indicates it is not part of the Sikh way of life.

*Kabeer, those mortals who consume marijuana, fish and wine  
- no matter what pilgrimages, fasts and rituals they follow, they will all go to hell. SGGS p1377*

*The joy of relaxation is better than drugs and sex and it does not allow you to destroy a relationship. You only destroy a relationship when you are not relaxed, when you are tense. Once your mind gets caught in a frequency, divorce is inevitable. And after divorce, the tragedy is that you have to relive your life. Yogi Bhajan, August 1, 1996*

### YB on shamanism

*because he couldn't be graceful enough to teach Kundalini Yoga. He's my first student and a first Sikh and first nonsense and first super sense. (Members laugh)*

*No, no, no, it is between him and me, we are very fair. I give you one example. He couldn't teach Kundalini Yoga. He got impressed by those lovely girls, you know, models and actress; I went through it before, so I knew it his position. So he taught them Shaman. I don't know what it is; it is kind of some healing situation in old time, from the cave time it used to be. You know what I mean? So, "I go to Guru Singh Shaman class," somebody said and she knew me long time ago; I pulled her on the side from the hair and I gave her two, three jerks, I said, "Wake up." I said, "Guru Singh is a good teacher, tell him to teach you, not Shaman you." (Students laugh)*

*And I took Guru Singh on the side and I said, "Guru Singh, stop it. In the end this duality will tear you up, you are my son. You can master the main road," and I think he listened. Oct 8, 1999*



### **The words and teachings of the Shabd Guru on the true medicine, the true herb:**

*"The greatest meditation is coming to the Guru. There is no meditation which can beat it. There's no technology which can make up for it. There's no grace which can be earned other than this. .... a person who doesn't have an altar where he can bow his forehead, that human cannot have any other technology to change the destiny written on the forehead. And if a man shall bow to the man, then man shall be influenced by man. This is why the Father of the Khalsa gave the Khalsa the Siri Guru Granth, the Word of God-like men, so that the destiny of the human can be changed and re-written with the word of God-like nature and characteristic." Yogi Bhajan "The Greatest Meditation" on <http://fateh.sikhnet.com>*

To create a consciousness that remains steady through and beyond the death process can only be achieved by means that are the least dependent on the earth and its various provisions. In other words by means which are themselves from beyond this everyday material and organic world. The songs and music brought to us from those beings in the highest state of consciousness are a road map to that state for others.

So what happens when we relate to and apply the wisdom and technology of the highest totem or alter. The use of word, mantra, shabd, to generate self-experience.

When a person will read, recite, certain texts, with all one's body, mind and soul, it will no longer be known merely as knowledge. When practiced with love and emotion transforming to devotion then it becomes an experience, a vibration of the words reflected and happening within. It awakens your inner voice. This is the food of self-experience, which is generated by one's own voice.

It is not the book, the ink on paper, but the way they are brought alive by one's own recitation and deep listening. Hence it is a self-initiated experience of self.

Self is the initiator, the self is the medicine, the self is the result. The correct practice of inner sound vibration produces all the required inner effects.

The Sri Guru Granth Sahib does not deny anything that exists on this planet, nor even beyond it. Rather it simply puts each thing in its clarity and relationship. Some of the text is a deep commentary on life from an extremely objective perspective.

The word of the Shabd guru acknowledges all things and distinguishes things like:

- The permanent from the temporary
- The inner door to truth and the outer material doors
- The inner, non-dependent reality and the exterior surface that we tend to rely on the manifest from the non-manifest.
- The life of a narcissistic person that gazes in the mirror of their own ego and mind compared to the one who turns to the teachings to gain a deep reflection of their true nature.
- and much more

In addition the Shabd Guru provides, through its quantum technology, a road map to the inner world, and ultimately to the true self within (Sat Naam).

In this way the teachings of the Guru do not in any manner imply that nature and the earthly world is bad or evil or toxic. It is simply very clear that it is the ocean of time and space, longitude and latitude, that we are here to respect, experience and finally to cross over; nothing more and nothing less.

The Guru points out the two ways of life like the two trees in the garden of Eden.

One is the tree of immortal life – not dependent on earthly things. We are Spirits passing through. The other is the tree of knowledge – totally dependent on things of the earth and defined by finite terms.

*"The bumble bee, addicted to the nectar of the 12 petalled flower, enshrines it in the heart. He holds his breath, suspended in the 16 petalled sky of the Akashic Ethers and beats his wings in ecstasy." SGGs*

Here the Guru is using the metaphor of the flower to tell us of the nectar that is found there. The Guru isn't telling us to take the juices of an external plant to get that ecstasy. It is when the sound current of the divine vibrates through our being, through the sound current of Shabd, then we can experience this inner ecstasy. This is the true nectar.

In yogic terms this might equate to various secretions of chemistry in the endocrine glands.

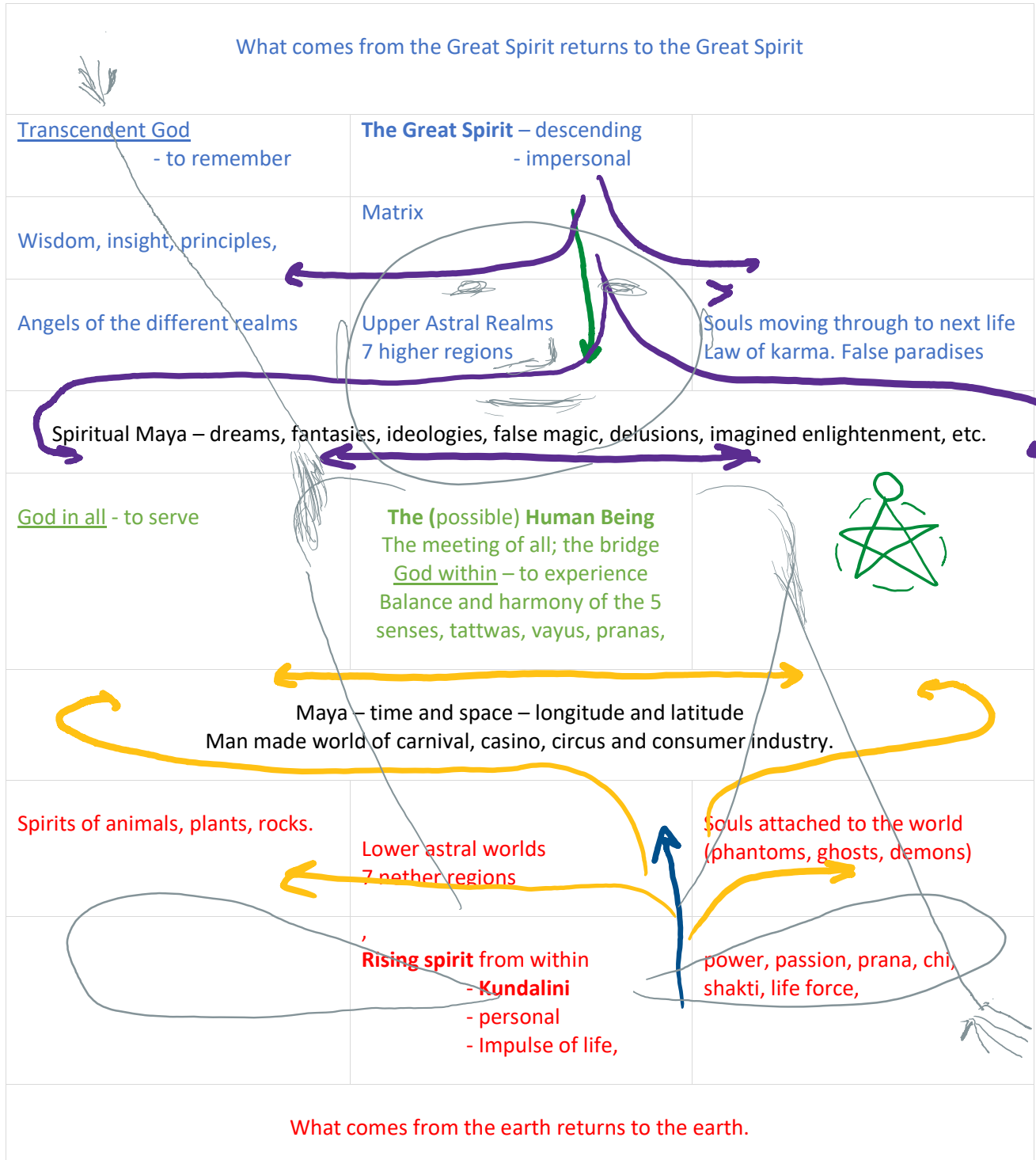
If one is interested in plants and nectar then they might try the inner version and see what experience it brings. The only thing is that it will require more personal effort from within yourself. It will require the ability to stay focused, committed, disciplined, dedicated and devoted. It will take a little more time. But then the result will be fully authentic and established. Remaining a part of your inner life for the rest of your life.

### More from the Shabd Guru on the true herb medicine

Guru Naanak repeatedly says that the body is the field of karma. And tells us to plant the seed of good action, the seed of the True Name, and that subsequently 'as we sow, so we reap and eat'. Here are just a few samples of the Guru's teachings relevant to the topics of this article:

- *Plant the light and mantra of the One God in your mind, and in this way cross over the World ocean; Kabir.*
- *Those who do not use intoxicants are true; p15*
- *a poisonous plant even when watered by the amrit/nectar will still give poison p65*
- *the name of the One God is to me like the drug to the addict p81*
- *administering the intoxicating drug of love I have won over the Lord of the Universe p81*
- *oh my mind there is only one medicine, one mantra and one healing herb; that is to centre your consciousness firmly on the One p156*
- *make good deeds your herbs p360*
- *in the Kali Yug, one who plants any other seed than the Naam loses all profit of this life p446*
- *to whom God gives the intoxicating herb of Divine Love, they drink the sublime essence. p702*
- *the self-willed person tells lies and thereby plants the seeds of poison, and so also eats poison. p753*
- *oh mortal, why are you going into the forest of corruption, you have been misled into eating the toxic drug. p1252*

A diagram to reflect upon



The human being, and the human community, is the bridge between individual and universal, between physical/material and spiritual.

Being human is to ground in the embodied state and learn from the sensory experience – in nature. Yet also to meditate and reflect and perceive the cosmos through direct perception.

To walk in harmony with (obey the laws of) nature, recognizing in nature the pure reflection of our true spiritual nature.

One of the few things that distinguishes the human form other creatures is the ability to consciously breath. Breath itself is therefore an integral part of becoming the possible human. Conscious breathing builds the intuitive sensitivity to the existing self, the natural environment and the vast and subtle universe.

*If you meditate on your breath, then through Pawan Guru. the Pranic Vidya, the knowledge of prana- of creation and creativity and all incarnations will dawn on you. You will start winning your self, start valuing your breath, valuing your environments. valuing your projection-and in this way everyone will in turn value you. YB Jan 17, 2000*

Wishing you every success and the full support of the hand of Grace upon your heart  
May all souls find their way through the delusions of the thick clouds of Spiritual Maya  
And come out clean and consciously reconnected to their original nature and innocence.  
May you continue becoming who you already are in your latent potential.  
May your true light burst forth and reveal the glory that sustains the world

With Love and Blessings to all.

SCS Oct 2019