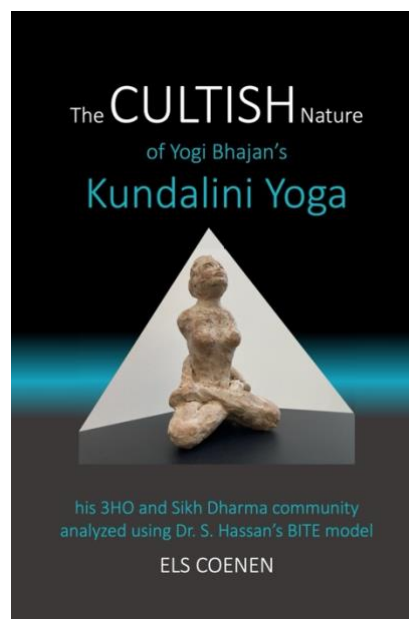


A teaser for the forthcoming book
expected in February 2025



The section below is part of

Chapter 2 – The Cultish Nature of 3HO

Getting High or Holy?

Bhajan's immense toolbox includes yoga sets and meditations that can be relaxing, exhausting, challenging, funny, meditative, impossible, confronting, sweet, short, or extremely long. Combined with mesmerizing chants, some of them can quickly induce a trance-like state and get happiness hormones flowing through the body.

There is nothing wrong with that if practitioners are well-informed about why they experience highs, how it occurs, and the associated risks. Unfortunately, Bhajan's teachings fall short in this regard. The teacher training does not clarify how and why yoga, meditation, and chanting induce a high. Many trainers and teachers convince their students—and may even believe it themselves—that each time they experience a high, they draw closer to God and advance on their path to enlightenment. Bhajan fostered this misconception by blending his own interpretation of Sikhism, which he termed Sikh Dharma, with his yoga.

When individuals believe they connect with higher spirits while under the influence of this yoga, they become particularly vulnerable. Their critical thinking diminishes, allowing ill-intentioned teachers to impose their beliefs without resistance. As we know by now, this is what Bhajan did, and it's referred to as spiritual abuse.

A few years ago, I took part in a meditation session led by a senior teacher at the Yoga Festival in France. I vividly remember something that happened:

The room was crowded. We were meditating, sitting cross-legged and leaning our heads all the way back. After several minutes, I came out of the position because my neck couldn't support it. People began making strange noises. In front of me, a woman shook all over. The teacher sat like a saint with his eyes closed, rolling his fingertips over his mala. As the tension in the room intensified, his voice became harsher, drier, and more severe.

"Do not give in. This is the moment. ... Don't lose it. Do not let your ego take this chance away from you. Surrender! Stay! ... This is the time. This is YOUR time. ... You are getting closer. You are almost there. ... Don't give in. You are in front of the gate. Enter. ... Enter! ENTER!"

The noises became louder and louder. People were breathing heavily. The woman in front of me was determined; she would not give in. Her body screamed, "STOP," but she would not listen. It all felt wild.

As I observed this, I reflected on how often I had crossed my boundaries. I anticipated where this woman was headed. She would soon enter a trance state, and, indeed, she did.

When the exercise ended, she collapsed physically, but mentally, she felt euphoric. She lay flat on the ground with a blissful smile on her face.

A few minutes later, we spoke. She proudly described the place she had visited, which was more beautiful and peaceful than anyone could imagine. She felt blessed and grateful that the teacher had taken her there and that Yogi Bhajan had given us this amazing meditation. She hugged me and said that God is Love; she now knew for certain.

In simple terms, this is what happened: Her glandular and nervous systems reacted to the stress in her body. Her conscious mind, guided by the teacher's voice, willfully disregarded her body's intelligence, which had only one option left after her signals went unrecognized: to enter survival mode. Hormones, including those associated with happiness, began to release, and her consciousness disconnected from the physical realm, leaving her in a state of bliss.

Instead of honoring her body for taking her to heaven, she honored her abusers. This had nothing to do with holiness and everything to do with getting high. Bhajan's trick had worked: she was grateful to him. Her dependence on his 'teachings' – and on the teacher – had only grown stronger.

Back then, I lacked the clarity to tell her that no teachings, spirit, or guru were involved. Witnessing this sparked a reflection in me that helped me recognize the manipulative nature of these teachings. The next time I entered a trance state, I was more aware that I had induced it myself. I still didn't see the spiritual abuse, as I was ignorant of the dark history of 3HO and Bhajan's sick intentions.

I was still too deeply in love with these altered states of consciousness and believed they were beneficial. Now, I realize that they hindered me from doing the hard work on myself. Like drugs and alcohol, they provide a quick way to find temporary relief from whatever difficult situation you face. However, the challenging work of breaking free from repetitive patterns that prevent me from growing as a human being began only many months after I left the cult and slowly regained my own identity and awareness.

The woman said she had heard angels singing. "Wow," I replied as if that was special. This event didn't help her evolve on her spiritual path, but it did inflate her spiritual ego. Maybe the angels were singing to her; who am I to say it's untrue? What concerns me is the praise she bestowed upon the teachers and teachings during this experience.

In the 3HO context, getting high occurs most frequently during White Tantra events (see section 3.2), rebirthing sessions (specific meditation sets available in videos featuring Yogi Bhajan), and Japa events (hours—or days—of mantra repetition). It is also prevalent in Sat Nam Rasayan sessions. SNR is a meditative healing technique closely related to Bhajan's yoga (see section 3.3).

At the end of the first chapter, we mentioned the interview with Davinder Singh (DS), the new CEO of 3HO starting in 2025. His first contact with 3HO was in 2015. Here is an excerpt from the dialogue he had with the interviewer, Hari Simran Kaur, who has been his wife since 2017:

HSK: Back to your first experience with Tantric Yoga. So, you're telling me that before 3HO you never sat down and did yoga for eight hours in a day or three days straight?

DS: No, I did Hot yoga, but this Tantra yoga situation ...

[He shakes his head to indicate it is something special, HSK starts giggling ...]

DS: No, I never had to stare into your eyes for those copious amounts of hours. ... It was good. I have to say, we had so much fun! We did have a lot of fun with the people around us as well. So, that was fantastic!

HSK: And did you experience the Tantric High?

DS: I did experience a Tantric High in 2017, but my real experience was in 2024. Day three. I really dove deep into that. It was an experience that I would suggest everybody to have.

*HSK: Yeah, absolutely. Tantra is not easy for sure. We all know it's difficult. We've seen that lots of people can keep their arms up better than we can, but I think the whole point is "to do it." And just, to do it, do it, do it, and **you will experience the high, for sure!***

She looked into the camera as she spoke. I realized that instead of an interview with the new CEO of 3HO, this was a commercial for White Tantra sessions. I smiled, recognizing that they had given me an extra paragraph for this "Getting High or Holy?" section of my manuscript. At least today, they openly admit it's all about 'getting high'!

Interestingly, during the interview, they avoided using the term 'White Tantra,' a label that has lasted for decades. Instead, they call it 'Tantric Yoga,' indicating that a rebranding may be in progress (see section 3.2).