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YOGA WEEKLY

ARTICLES December 21, 2009



The Yoga Teacher in the Apse - Have You Ever Seen That Before? (photo: Mark Hartman)

ARTICLE: Yoga Under a Spire?

An Unlikely Coupling Brings Hallelujahs



At the end of her Kundalini classes, Hari Kaur Khalsa plays “By Thy Grace” by Satnam Kaur. In a recent class, she paused to point out the words, “Some day the day will come when all the glory shall be thine. People will say it’s yours and I shall deny it. Not mine.”

“I play this song because it’s important to attribute all your talents and failures to God,” she said. “Today I might be great but tomorrow I could be really stupid.”

Hari regularly pokes fun at herself. “Hold onto your turbans,” she called out during one class while demonstrating Camel pose. She also rides up and down 2nd Avenue—dressed in turban, long-flowing white dress and white disco boots—on a scooter bike.

She’s a high energy, deeply caring teacher. And she has a lot to be excited about these days. After an unexpected departure from [Golden Bridge Yoga](#) in August 2009 where she served as Director of Education since its opening in January 2007, Hari has seized on the opportunity to teach Kundalini yoga in the unlikelyst of places: a church.

“I was inspired by something [Yogi Bhajan](#) said,” Hari said. “He set us the challenge of opening a Kundalini yoga studio on every street corner.”

In October, 2009, Hari and a special pastor, Lyndon Harris, opened up “Village Yoga” at [St. John’s Church](#) in Greenwich Village. There, Hari offers Kundalini classes and workshops on meditation and healing.

“Village Yoga came about very organically,” she said.

It was Harris who facilitated Hari’s move to St. John’s. He was a regular student of Hari’s Wednesday night gong class at Golden Bridge, and was eager to open up St. John’s Church to activities like tap

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dancing and jazz nights. But he dreamed about offering Kundalini Yoga.

He'd been asking Hari for months to teach at the church, he said.

"I used to hitch a cloud home after her classes," he said.

"I'm like a New York City cabdriver," Hari chimed in. "I take people to their destination and drop 'em off."

Finally, after a change in management at Golden Bridge in August, Hari decided to partner with Harris and bring yoga to the church.

The church, on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village was built in 1821 and has high ceilings, stained glass windows and amazing acoustics for Kundalini chanting and gong.

"It's an amazing space to teach in," Hari said. "Passersby walk in off the street and come take a yoga class."

But, Harris said, they've had to find innovative ways to adapt the church to yoga.

"That's happening even in the most practical form, right down to moving the pews," he joked, referring to the amount of manpower it took to unbolt and move the heavy pews to open up the space for yoga. Volunteers usually come in beforehand to lift the pews and move them to the back of the church to make space for the 40 to 50 people who come to Hari's class.

But the church does seem to be the best fit for the pair's vision—to create a space for healing and community.

"Yoga is not just physical," Hari said. "I want people to stay after class and chat and have Yogi tea and cookies...Our goal is to show the common ground on how different traditions approach healing and growth. Healing is a conversation. We're inviting people to tell us what we need. I want to be of service."

"Everything we do here is done with love," Harris added. "It takes two hours to make the Yogi tea."

The church has an open policy for its activities: all faith traditions, ethnicities, creeds, belief systems, non-belief systems and orientations are encouraged to participate in events.

"Yoga teaches that we are all one," Hari said. "When people believe that tremendous things can happen."

That open policy has attracted many enthusiastic Kundalini converts from around the community. Tim Skehan, who volunteers at the church asked Hari one night if it was possible his hair was getting darker as a result of Kundalini yoga.

"Even my wife has been commenting," he said. "Kundalini yoga is the only thing I've been doing that's different." Hari replied that it was possible—sometimes, gray hair occurs as the result of a Pitta imbalance, she said. Doing Kundalini yoga brings the doshas into balance.

"It's not that your hair is getting dark, it's just not going gray," she said.

Village Yoga isn't Hari's only project. Because of her stellar reputation, Hari was flooded with offers after she left Golden Bridge.

She has taught Kundalini Yoga for more than twenty years and studied directly under Yogi Bhanjan, working with him as a course director of his intensive teacher-training program from 1995 until his death in 2004. She's a two-time published author, and has taught at institutions such as Harvard University, Faulkner Hospital and the Omega Institute in New York. She was also a founding board member and vice president of the national Yoga Alliance.

"All of these offers just seemed to come to me," she said. "I didn't go out and apply for yoga teaching jobs."

In addition to teaching at the church, Hari is running Kundalini teacher trainings in New York City and Millis, MA. She is also going to be offering a 3-session workshop on "Esoteric Yoga and the Gong" at the Open Center next spring. She is also teaching a Thursday, 10 a.m. class at Celine's Dance Studio on Wooster Street, and currently serves as an executive representative for the department of information at the United Nations for [3HO](#), the international Kundalini Yoga nonprofit organization founded by Yogi Bhanjan.

Both Hari and Harris are also busy working on books. Hari is writing a fictionalized memoir on Yogi Bhajan and a nonfiction book about the moon centers. Harris is working on a memoir about being a pastor at St. Paul's Chapel, which is directly across the street from the former World Trade Center during 9/11. His book is tentatively titled, *The Little Church that Stood: Hope and Healing in the Aftermath of 9/11*.

Even though Hari is an international teacher and could travel worldwide, she said is most excited about teaching in New York.

"I'm returning to the grass roots," she said. "This is such a creative city. It's like there's a miracle on every corner."

At St. John's Church, Hari teaches a gong meditation class every Monday at 7 p.m. On November 24, she expanded classes to Tuesdays at 10 a.m., 6 p.m. and 7:45 p.m. Classes are \$10 suggested donation. On New Years Eve Hari will teach a special candle-lit gong meditation class, and a Kundalini breath meditation class called "Beaming and Creating the Future." On January 10th, Hari and Lydon will give a talk entitled, "Conversations with a Pastor and a Yogi. Go to www.stjohnschristopherstreet.org for more details. To keep up with all of Hari's projects, go to www.reachhari.com.

--Marie Carter

ARTICLE: High Tech Yoga

Dialing Up a Class



While the world of yoga is decidedly lo-fi, there are instances where technology can definitely enhance your experience. Enter the iPhone - advertised as your handy dandy go everywhere best friend that with a few clicks can point you in the direction of the closest, bestest yoga class. True?

We decided to road check the latest and see if they make the digital holiday stocking stuffers that Mighty Apple wants us to believe they are.

[Yogoer](#) \$.99 (yogoer.com) features a comprehensive map of yoga, Pilates, meditation, and other wellness classes, based on the address you enter into your phone. As with all the apps, locations appear on a grid map, with pins color coded by category (Yoga, Core, Dance, and Fitness), showing addresses and phone numbers. While it makes location scouting easy, Yogoer does not offer class or instructor information- you just get a link to a website. On a recent jaunt in the West Village, a quick scan while on the corner of 13th street and 7th avenue pointed me to Integral Yoga, Karma Kids, The New York Center for Kripalu Yoga, and much more. A click on the map pin directs you to a studio profile, which, depending on how much info has been updated by the studio gives you stats like address, phone number, class prices and new student deals.

Some of the profiles are bare bones. Because Yogoer is user-fueled, you can add studio information to fill in spots that they may have missed, or review your favorite class and teachers. While this app offers the least amount of info, currently, it's by far the most comprehensive for complete fitness, since it tracks down more than just yoga classes. And the price is hard to beat – 99 cents for the download.

[MINDBODY](#) \$1.99. The database software used by tons of yoga studios around the country is now available to students looking for classes, teachers, and yoga schedules. It's an extension of the brand, smartly designed. Classes are sorted by a timetable, so it's easy to find something that fits into your schedule. They feature detailed class and teacher descriptions. On a frantic Monday, I clicked around to find the soonest, closest class to home, and was on my mat at Bend and Bloom in Park Slope in 25 minutes. MindBody also features a great mileage restriction- so you can search as far and wide as you like.

[Yoga Local](#) \$4.99 (yogalocal.com) Brand new this week, Yoga Local gives you listings for over 200 yoga studios in the 5 boroughs and the greater Metropolitan area, including northern New Jersey and the Hamptons, offering the widest coverage of all these yoga apps. The newest to the party and the most expensive, YogaLocal is extremely comprehensive—featuring yoga news, published daily, with content including studio announcements, legislative information, and opinion pieces, from sources like - yours truly - YogaCityNYC.com, [Yoga Dork](#) and [HuffPo](#). To see Yoga Local's fun and very New Yawk You Tube advertisement [visit our blog](#).

As with MindBody and Yogoer, studio directors have direct access to their profiles, so up-to-date information on substitutes, class descriptions and schedule updates is available – if the studios actually do the updating. Thoughtful design and a far wider swath of coverage make this app worth the extra bucks if you're technically minded. Of course, you have to spend a couple hundred for an iPhone and