

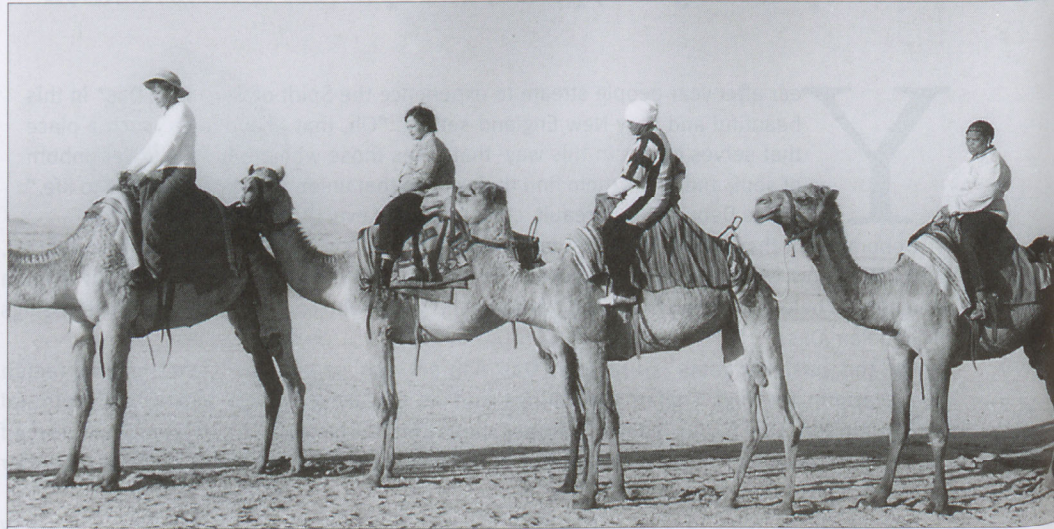
beautiful as butterflies

A full-length documentary film chronicles the story of four brave women practicing Kundalini Yoga in Cape Town, South Africa

By Jai Jagdeesh Kaur

Six months have passed since the completion and premiere, at a well known Cape Town, South Africa cinema, of the full-length documentary, *Beautiful as Butterflies*. The film shows the healing process through Kundalini Yoga and the creative arts of four formerly abused women from poor communities in Cape Town. And still the healing continues on a daily, often immeasurable, cellular and deeply spiritual level.

It is wonderful to think that all four women came from the award-winning literacy project at St. Joseph's Adult Education Program in



When I met Yogi Bhan during the World Parliament of Religions in 1999 in Cape Town, I complained that Kundalini Yoga was not sufficiently available in the poor communities here. He said that in seven years it would be.

Cape Town. Their courage in imparting their experiences to others has shattered many stereotypes and greatly inspired viewers. The women have been present at several screenings to lead discussions about healing and abuse.

"It was as though my body was in knots," explains Rachma Attwood. "Yoga undid them." She believes that Kundalini Yoga and her prayers have brought her to the restorative space in which she now resides.

Desiree Mathinus, who has worked in the laundry facility at the Cape Town military base for 20 years, says that yoga has changed the course of her life forever. Radiant and full of enthusiasm for each day, she and Rachma are training to become yoga teachers so that they can convey their experiences with others in their community to whom yoga is not yet readily available. The administrators at her workplace are extremely supportive of her chosen path. She was recently promoted to an office position, and they want her to teach yoga at the base.

The film provided the vehicle through which Desiree, who was abused since the age of seven by a family member, courageously shared her suffering for the first time. Yoga gave her the means to repair her soul. Her husband is a priest and now she includes Kundalini Yoga in her counseling with his parishioners. Her own priest extols the virtues of Kundalini Yoga. Margaret Jones and Nomsa Ntlabati, a rape crisis counselor, both sing the praises of Kundalini Yoga and the journey it has taken them on.

Everyone approached about the project generously gave of their gifts without thought of financial remuneration and were happy to contribute to the nonprofit community in South Africa. KRI Teacher Trainer Guru Terath Kaur of Espanola, New Mexico held a workshop at the beginning of the film on communication, and KRI certified teacher Pritham Hari Kaur of South Africa facilitated the last workshop with the women in the desert of Namibia. The exquisite and haunting music and chant vibrations of Snatam Kaur of Eugene, Oregon, reach the viewers' hearts. It is as though, by watching the film, people are touched by a Kundalini "state of being."

When I met Yogi Bhan during the World Parliament of Religions in 1999 in Cape Town, I complained that Kundalini Yoga was not sufficiently available in the poor communities here. He said that in seven years it would be. In April 2006, Desiree Mathinus and Rachma Attwood are training to become Kundalini Yoga teachers. As a result of the film, St. Joseph's Adult Education Program has been approached by psychiatrists from state mental hospitals, prisons, and centers for abused women, and we are teaching Kundalini Yoga in all these various communities.

Kundalini Yoga became a lifeline of hope for all four women who took hold of this chance to voice their history and rediscover joy. They remembered the words to long forgotten songs and through yoga once more learned to sing.

Beautiful as Butterflies will be screened at the European Yoga Festival in France on Thursday, July 27, 2006, at an evening study group at 5:30 p.m. in the chateau. For further information and to purchase a DVD, visit www.stjosephsaep.co.za. All proceeds from the film go to our nonprofit organizations. ■

Jai Jagdeesh Kaur/Julia Landau is the director of two nonprofit organizations, St. Joseph's Adult Education Program and Footprints Educational Trust, which both provide skills training. She is also a filmmaker, a journalist, a mother of three, and a Kundalini Yoga teacher. *Journey to Myself*, her latest book, contains creative writing from women in prison. She was given the Sunflower Award for her work with women from marginalized communities.