

Kundalini and the Near-Death Experience

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ABSTRACT: While many now believe that the near-death experience can, in some cases, activate the kundalini, there is still little understanding of what is meant by the arousal of this power. The awakening of kundalini actually means the reversal of the activity of the reproductive system and the activation of another chamber in the brain, which, if all goes well, can lead to enlightenment or illumination, the next stage of human evolution. One objective proof of this phenomenon is *urdhava-retas*, the upward flow of the sexual energy. Unless this reversal occurs and persists, there can be no meaningful awakening.

In 1977, the very first issue of *Spiritual India and Kundalini*, a magazine published by the Kundalini Research and Publication Trust in Srinagar, Kashmir, carried a dramatic article by Joseph Dippong, a Canadian businessman. Briefly, the story it told went like this: In 1970, Dippong participated in what might be described as an "encounter group" consisting of 17 businessmen. In a mood of hostility and in the midst of a heated discussion, one of the more aggressive men stared at Dippong and shouted, "Let's kill him; let's kill him." His article described what followed:

And down on the floor I went, with about a dozen or more people on top of me. At first it appeared to be a joke, and I know in everyone's mind, indeed, it was meant to be one—you might say sort of kidding around to prove a point. . . . I was now being deprived of oxygen, without any possible way of communicating this fact with my hands, voice, or anything. . . . The joke had gone too far! Those who were putting me to this test had lost control of the situation.

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... According to the 17 witnesses, my heart had stopped beating and I had no apparent pulse. My lungs stopped functioning, and my body, which had turned almost black was lying motionless on the floor. I was declared clinically dead. There was chaos in the room. Those who had pushed this little joke into a catastrophe were full of terror and fear. . . .

The last thing I remembered was that I prayed to God. The next consciousness—which could have happened in seconds, minutes, years, or even an eternity—slowly began to unfold. At first I was aware of beautiful colours, all the colours of the rainbow, magnified in crystallized light, beaming with brilliance in every direction. It was almost as if I were in a beautiful pasture, with flowers, and the most beautiful, soothing, music ringing in my ears. Music which was close, so soothing, so loving, and the like of which I had never heard before. All this was very familiar to me while in this state of consciousness, like another life, a life after death, the hereafter. I don't know to this day where I was. I was no longer aware of my physical existence on earth, of my friends, my family, or my relatives. It was only consciousness at the time, but what a glorious consciousness it was! Yes, I was consciousness with awareness.

... I could see all and everything at the same time. I was aware of a tunnel, and I was in the middle of this tunnel coming closer and closer to its end. In the far distance I noticed two distinct circles—at least this is how I must describe them in the limited language available to me now. . . .

In the middle of one circle there was a most beautiful figure of a being. It was neither a man nor a woman, but it was both. I have yet to lay my eyes on anything as beautiful as this was. The love which poured out of this being's eyes was immense. The face was shining with an ever-radiant, golden hue—glorious colours and the ever-present, beautiful white light. . . . It was my father—but it wasn't him. It was like going home. It was something way above me, yet it was still a part of me. . . .

The impression I felt at the time was one of omnipotence, of unending, glorious love; love that I had never experienced ever before. It was almost as though I had met my Maker. Indeed, this stupendous, unbelievable, powerful light, which seemed thousands and thousands of times stronger than our sunlight, did not bother my eyes, and I just wanted to have more and more of it.

... The awareness that came upon me—it still persists—was that life is eternal, that indeed we never die. We take on other forms of life and the physical body is nothing else but a sort of container. I had the feeling that life indeed is omnipotent and omniscient. (Dippong, 1977, pp. 33–36)

For years afterwards, Dippong searched for an explanation, talking to many people who had "death" experiences under different conditions and circumstances. Then he began to explore the occult and experi-

ment with various kinds of meditation. He said he met with gurus, lamas, priests, and rabbis, yet no one was able to give him a satisfactory answer to his question.

Finally, in 1975, he visited Gopi Krishna at his home in Srinagar, Kashmir. Dippong wrote that this meeting

turned out to be three hours of the warmest, kindest and most informative conversation I have ever had. . . . For the first time in more than 100 attempts, it was the Pandit who not only explained what the vision was and what my experience meant, but also described and explained to me the enchanting colours and feelings behind the experience. (Dippong, 1977, pp. 36-37)

According to Dippong's article, the pandit also shared with him some unusual, often bizarre, practices that some yogis have undertaken, and still do on occasion, in order to reach the higher, blissful states of consciousness. One of these practices, called kercheri mudra, involves cutting part of the ligament at the base of the tongue. It takes several months to complete the operation, because each new incision is made only after the previous one has healed.

When the ligament is finally cut back sufficiently, the yogi attempts to swallow the tongue in an effort to induce suffocation, hoping that under such extreme conditions the kundalini will awaken momentarily, sending prana or nerve energy up the spine to the brain. This practice sometimes proves fatal. This phenomenon may explain why, each year, a considerable number of adolescent boys accidentally hang themselves.

Over the years, I often discussed near-death experiences (NDEs) and other mystical experiences with Krishna, and I have read most of his writings, including those not yet published. Among the more important points he made was that kundalini is not the energy itself but rather is a *mechanism*. He insisted that in the not-too-distant future science will discover that kundalini is the biological mechanism responsible for human evolution. This mechanism, he said, involves every cell in the body, including the brain and nervous system, even the genes, and therefore has an effect on the progeny of those whom it transforms.

The key to understanding the kundalini process is prana, which has two aspects, cosmic and individual. By individual prana, Krishna meant the subtle biochemical substance that it creates as a link between itself and the atoms of matter. In the final analysis, atoms

vanish into energy. Kundalini is the mechanism, or power center, through which both the cosmic and individual prana are intermingled and regulated. Although it is actually immaterial, prana, in its individual aspect, is life-energy, and it is fully conversant not only with the laws of matter but also with the complicated organic forms it has to create.

Like the atom and its ingredients, electrons and protons, prana is in a perpetual state of activity. The difference is that prana is conscious, with super-intelligence transcending time and space. It can shape and mold matter, according to given laws, to create individual prana and organic formations.

Both aspects of prana spring from the same source, the cosmic shakti or energy. Subsequently it takes two forms, the organic and the inorganic, to create the universe. All bodily functions are conducted by universal prana, or, in other words, by cosmic life. It is like electromagnetic waves that come to the television or the radio. We all have pranic bodies, and universal prana pervades the whole body, but the body makes use of only a small portion of it.

When a failing organ in the body has to be replaced in an operation, it is not the surgeon who performs the healing process; nor is it the mother who directs the development of the embryo in the womb. Both are conducted by prana. All mental activity is also due to prana. It is the prana that supplies energy to the brain for thinking, feeling, and every act of will.

In a near-death experience, this same conscious life-energy endeavors to make a last-ditch effort to save the brain by rallying all available organic resources into action. The mechanism that powers and regulates this life-saving operation is kundalini. Then a more powerful prana, acting as the agent of kundalini, flows directly into the brain, causing the visions and other mental phenomena so frequently described by those who survive the crisis.

The difference between normal prana, which operates in everyone, and the more powerful prana that springs into activity at the onset of an NDE or sudden kundalini awakening, is that the latter is lustrous. In normal consciousness, there is no ingredient of luminosity. But when this higher prana pervades the head, a bright effulgence fills the brain and eventually becomes an inseparable part of the transformed consciousness, if all goes well.

Immediately after the awakening, which can sometimes be precipitated by a near-death experience, the rhythm of the body changes. The pulse becomes quicker and the blood courses more rapidly through the

body. There is increased activity in the digestive and eliminatory organs, too, because the whole body undergoes a process of rejuvenation in order to adjust itself to the new life-energy sent up by kundalini.

Krishna (1972) described the entire process in detail. From the very beginning, he wrote, the whole head is filled with a lustrous glow, and a stream of energy pours into it through the spinal canal. Every part of the brain is flooded with an indescribable light. Concentrated vital energy from all parts of the body, even from the toes and fingers, is felt flowing through all the nerves, coming together in the spinal cord, then rising as a stream of blissful nectar into the highest center of the brain. This nectar is also known as ambrosia and soma, which are repeatedly mentioned in the *Rig Veda* (Ingalls, 1957).

At the start, the energy is directed into the brain from the base of the spinal canal. But later on, when the entire network of nerves in the body is stimulated to activity, the energy pours into the spinal canal through *all its length* and is then carried into the brain.

A not altogether inappropriate way of thinking about the evolutionary process is to imagine a city the size of New York having its entire communication system overhauled and upgraded in just a single month. Once the decision is made to undertake the Herculean project, millions of highly skilled technicians are put to work day and night, replacing the old copper wires and switches with fiber-optic cables and the latest technology in computers and other electronic devices.

Although each technician works both independently and as part of a team, all are under the central control of the master engineer, or in computer terms, the central processing unit (CPU). What would ordinarily have taken two or three generations to complete is now accomplished almost overnight.

The same thing happens when kundalini is awakened fully. That it rarely succeeds in raising a person to a higher state of consciousness, by completely rebuilding the nervous system and brain, simply means that not all conditions have been met. In most cases, after the first experience, the process dwindles to an extent that a permanent transformation of the body and the brain is precluded.

Regeneration reaches its fullest expression in only a few cases, mainly because heredity plays an essential role in the process. Few people have the right combination of genes to permit such an evolutionary leap in a single lifetime. Because the kundalini process affects even the most subtle levels of the molecular and genetic structure, the expanded consciousness achieved by the fully awakened individual is,

to a large extent, passed on to his or her progeny, thus advancing the evolution of the race. That, too, is why celibacy after the transformation is completely unwarranted.

The NDE, then, is just another of nature's ways of hinting every now and then at what lies ahead for each one of us. It is like a tug upward, reminding us to try to make the ascent. If it really signifies the awakening of kundalini—and sometimes it really does—then the evolutionary process begins and, at the very least, it should result in a permanent change in personality.

In that case it is essential that the individual be given reliable information, and this can seldom be found in occult or speculative books or through hearsay. Like a woman who has just conceived, the individual must carefully regulate his or her life to maintain optimum health for the new, rapidly developing personality. The correct foods, including those high in protein, should be consumed in abundance; adequate sleep and rest are very important; and in every way possible, those individuals in whom the power is newly activated should try to remove themselves from stressful conditions and inharmonious environments.

Since this is rarely possible in modern society, due to economic factors beyond the individual's control, the chances of a successful conclusion are so slim, even when all other factors are right, as to be almost negligible. It is not nature's fault if the seed of a rose falls on barren soil, nor is it her fault if the awakened person must earn a living and support a family in an inhospitable atmosphere. That is why society must change.

Kundalini was called Vach, the Goddess of Speech, because one of the first symptoms of a healthy awakening is *vaikhari*, the spontaneous flow of words, full of wisdom and worth. The transformed subject must become something even more than a genius, an illumined seer. Krishna was convinced that in the future, when the secrets of kundalini are better understood, many enlightened sages and polymaths will arrive on the scene to help guide the race to higher states of consciousness. *Panchastavi*, a hymn in five cantos written by an anonymous illumined Kashmiri poet about a thousand years ago, said: "Thou [kundalini] bring them to fullness, and they thus become world-teachers" (1976, p. 73).

Just as the normal period of human gestation is 280 days, so kundalini also has its normal term. According to Krishna, that is usually 18 months. This does not mean the process is completed in that period. If all conditions are right, it will continue through one's entire lifetime.

But the first 12 to 18 months are by far the most critical, just as the time spent in the womb is the most critical for a new life.

During this period, one should remain celibate. The reason for this is that the semen in men or erotic fluid in women is being transformed into the pranic radiation that supplies nourishment to the brain and nervous system, as well as fuel for the expanding flame of consciousness. If there is one thought that should be inculcated into everyone interested in the evolution of consciousness, it is contained in *urdhava-retas*, a Sanskrit word that means, literally, reversal (*urdhava*) of the seed (*retas*), that is, the upward flow of the seminal essence. In common usage in India centuries ago, it was synonymous with the word "illuminated" or "enlightened."

Although it may take thousands of years before *Homo sapiens* fully understands how evolution works in the human body, we already know enough to cooperate in many ways. We should not fear that adults in whom kundalini awakens will employ their newly acquired powers for selfish goals. Nature has provided built-in safeguards that turn the energy against anyone who employs it to gain an advantage over others.

We should, however, develop of healthy fear of those in whom kundalini is already active *at birth*, should they choose to pursue evil ends. It is our responsibility to make this knowledge widely known, so that such individuals can be easily recognized, and their ambitions thwarted before they exceed manageable bounds. In this age of the electronic media, when charismatic men and women can manipulate the masses should they so wish, the knowledge of kundalini is essential for humanity's survival.

The "New Aquarian Conspiracy"

From the dawn of the Age of Aquarius, New Age writers have avoided the issue of evolution. The scholars who have focused their attention on kundalini have not furnished a clue as to the magnitude of the subject they are addressing, as though they are as much in the dark about its implications as their students and readers.

What is going to save the race from nuclear annihilation and lead us into the Promised Land, if not accelerated evolution? The publicity attending the publication of Michael Murphy's *The Evolution of the Body* (1992) is only a murmur compared to the uproar that will deafen our ears once kundalini is properly presented to the media; it is but the tip of an iceberg of controversy that will rip through the American

psyche when the public begins to understand what is really at stake. And when the stakes *are* known, only those who have an in-depth knowledge of kundalini will be able to calm the waters and rescue the drowning multitudes. In such troubled waters, writers like Murphy who have ignored kundalini will be of no help whatsoever.

Those who write about evolution in general and the mechanism of evolution in particular should be acutely aware that no other subject, with the possible exception of nuclear disarmament, is as important to global survival. In failing to take into account kundalini and its implications, the authors risk the stern rebuke of future scholars who will take up the same quest in the decades and centuries to come.

The doctrine of kundalini signifies the discovery of one of the greatest secrets of nature known to humankind. The only way of crossing the ocean of illusion that now befuddles science is to attain the next higher dimension of being, where the sensual world ceases to dominate the mind and reveals itself to be nothing but a projection of an Almighty Consciousness.

When the truth of this doctrine is empirically established, it will cause a revolution. Most of the seemingly insurmountable problems facing us today, including drugs, uncontrollable population growth, environmental pollution, and religious fanaticism, are but symptoms of obstructed evolution and will dissolve once science comes to grips with kundalini.

To get a better perspective of this future battle of the minds, it might be helpful to review a few incidents of the recent past, because a whole new generation has grown up since kundalini was first brought to our attention. I met Krishna for the first time in 1970 in Zurich, two years after his autobiography, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* (1971b/1968) was published in England, and just before it was brought out in the United States. He had already completed *The Secret of Yoga* (1972), and in a letter I had received some months earlier, he had asked me to find a publisher for it. That same year I incorporated the Kundalini Research Foundation in New York as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

Although *The Secret of Yoga* (Krishna, 1972) was a scholarly work with numerous references to ancient and obscure treatises difficult to find, its chief value lay in its descriptions of the transcendent state, as far as was possible to do so linguistically in our present state of knowledge. Like many of the books Krishna wrote subsequently, it was also of considerable value in suggesting the means to achieve this state, and in making the world aware of the dangers inherent in continued violation of the biological laws of evolution.

By 1970 more than 30 years had already passed since Krishna awakened the kundalini in himself, and during those intervening years he had gathered a large amount of documentary evidence to bolster the remarkable knowledge he had obtained through intuition. In a letter to me he wrote (personal communication, 1970):

My first book is free of any scholarly references. But I could not continue to write in the same vein forever. I have absolutely no desire to introduce supernatural romance, adventure, or phantasy in the realm of the super-conscious. The descriptions I am providing must be found valid even after a thousand years. Just as the descriptions contained in the Upanishads stand true even today, after a lapse of more than 2,500 years, in the same way the accounts contained in our books should stand true 2,000 years from this date. In order to adhere to this principle, meticulous care is necessary in the choice of words. What I am asserting must be verified by posterity word for word.

Ruth Nanda Anshen, protege of Alfred North Whitehead and a personal friend of Pope Pius XII, Albert Einstein, Jonas Salk, and other intellectual and spiritual luminaries, published *The Secret of Yoga* (Krishna, 1972) in her prestigious Religious Perspectives Series at Harper and Row. She also published a shorter, introductory treatise, entitled *The Biological Basis of Religion and Genius* (Krishna, 1971a), which included a 46-page introduction by Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, Director of the Max Planck Institute for Life Sciences.

Von Weizsäcker had been the protege of Werner Heisenberg, with whom Krishna had discussed kundalini in depth at a meeting in Munich in 1968. Heisenberg told Krishna that he agreed fully but could not express his view publicly because of the damage it would do to his reputation as a physicist. When Adolph Hitler asked Heisenberg and von Weizsäcker to work on the atom bomb, Weizsäcker refused; after World War II he was honored by the German government for this, and for his scientific achievements, by giving him his own Max Planck Institute. For a scientist of such worldwide repute to write a lengthy introduction to a small book by an obscure, uneducated clerk from a remote region of the Indian subcontinent was unprecedented; Anshen, however, was well aware of its historic significance.

Taken together, these three books comprised a wealth of detailed information on kundalini, and yet, so surprising was the "secret" of yoga that hardly anyone took notice. What few reviews were written omitted any mention of the secret; this despite the fact that the secret was explained on the dust jacket in boldface caps:

[The book] is an exploration of the complex terrain of Yoga and its source of energy, *Kundalini*, in the light of modern knowledge. Gopi

Krishna distinguishes *Kundalini* from the miraculous and supernatural to bring it within the orbit of a demonstrable natural law governing the evolution of the human race. He surveys the aim of Yoga and how it can be achieved, describes its disciplines and physiology, discriminates between the true understanding of Yoga from the false, outlines the biology of *Kundalini*, its fact and fiction, and presents *Kundalini* as the key to enlightenment and Cosmic Consciousness.

And the person who achieves a metamorphosis in consciousness, says Krishna, reaps a harvest of transcendent, genius, and psychic powers. Although many modern authors acknowledge the psychic gifts, ecstasies, visions, and enlarged consciousness that these individuals enjoy, these same writers maintain a silence with regard to the intellectual stature accorded to these special few. This omission, argues the author—the remarkable increase in intellectual power—is THE SECRET OF YOGA. (Krishna, 1972, dust jacket)

From the very beginning in 1970, my job, as a former newspaper editor and public relations man, was to do my best to make this information available. To this end, I mailed out more than a thousand copies of *The Biological Basis of Religion and Genius* (Krishna, 1971a) to scholars and scientists, and more than 300 copies of *The Secret of Yoga* (Krishna, 1972) to professional journals, magazines, and newspapers.

Years later, Kenneth Ring and I discussed the subject several times. This was all the more reason for my disappointment when I received a complimentary copy of his book *Heading Toward Omega* (1984) shortly after its publication. Several of Krishna's books were listed in the bibliography, which pleased me very much, but his descriptions of kundalini were wholly inadequate. Moreover, there was no emphasis at all of its inestimable value to mankind. While it is true that Ring's primary aim was to explore the links between kundalini and the near-death experience, he had included just enough information to give readers the impression that they now knew the basic facts about the former. Unfortunately, however, this was not the case.

Kundalini is the reversal of the reproductive system. There would be no kundalini without the reversal of the sex energy. To describe the kundalini process and not emphasize and elaborate on the all-important sexual connection was the same, in my opinion, as not describing it at all. Furthermore, Ring, like nearly all the other writers on the subject, showed little or no appreciation of the fact that for thousands of years knowledge of kundalini was a jealously guarded secret. In his chapter on "The Biological Basis of NDEs," he wrote, "Although the literature on kundalini is now extensive, the term is still unfamiliar to many people" (Ring, 1984, p. 229). This is a misleading statement.

The word "kundalini" has still to appear in any dictionary, nor can anything about it be found in any general encyclopedia. When Richard Milner included references to kundalini in *The Encyclopedia of Evolution* (1990), he was chided by specialists in evolution at the Museum of Natural History, where he is an editor of *Natural History* magazine. By no stretch of the imagination can the literature on kundalini be considered "extensive." The knowledge of kundalini is still a secret, despite the numerous "kundalini masters" who claim otherwise in the advertising pages of New Age magazines.

Ring quoted Stanley Dean rather extensively, citing the Miami psychiatrist as an authority on what Dean called "ultraconsciousness" (Dean, 1975). Dean described ten characteristics of a person who has experienced such a state, but omitted mention of the one essential characteristic, namely the upward flow of the seminal essence or radiation. Though his views on the "ultraconscious" state added nothing new to the literature, he clearly understood the historical significance of *anything* on mysticism in today's materialistic world enough to have his short paper on psychiatry and mysticism read into the Congressional Record.

Some months after John White borrowed from me more than a dozen books on kundalini, his *Kundalini, Evolution and Enlightenment* (1979) was published, and those same few books had formed the basis of the anthology, the very one that had given Ring the erroneous impression that literature on the subject was so extensive. White introduced me to Edgar Mitchell about the time that Mitchell was considering the possibility of founding the Institute of Noetic Sciences. He wished to have Krishna's opinion on the idea, and asked me to forward a letter to him in Kashmir. The pandit's response was a 40-page letter in iambic pentameter. Here is a sample stanza taken from page 25 of the letter in verse:

What hope can you see for a world distraught
 By hundreds of conflicting streams of thought?
 The growing vagrancy, indiscipline,
 Promiscuity and disaffection in
 The youth stem from the fact that they are not
 Harmoniously united in their thought.

The object of the evolutionary drive
 Is that the embodied soul should learn to dive
 Into the Deep, of which he is a drop,
 To reap a more and more abundant crop
 Of knowledge, for man has but made a start
 Towards a peak, if he plays well his part

Where such a feast is spread before his eyes,
That nothing on the earth nor of the skies
Compares to it, where, brighter than the sun,
The cosmos fuses with the Eternal One.

Julian Huxley, the eminent British biologist, also exchanged views with Krishna and received a similar response in verse that ran to 57 pages. Afterwards, Huxley, whose faith in agnosticism seemed to have been slightly shaken by it, replied to the effect that perhaps the pandit's views were not so far off the mark after all. He wrote, in part (J. Huxley, personal communication, April 5, 1972):

I suppose I could be described as an atheist, but I prefer the term agnostic, coined by my famous grandfather, T.H. Huxley. Frankly we just don't know anything about a God or Gods, about Divine guidance or control of planetary and human affairs.

However, I still maintain that biological evolution can be "explained" (or understood) in terms of a modernized version of Darwin's Natural Selection; and that this applies also in part of Man's evolution, though here additional elements come into play—conscious thought and will, and social organization and tradition. . . .

Character derives from one's own action and knowledge—or through "transcendental" life-enhancing experiences. Please give my best regards to Mr. Krishna and say that I think we are brothers in the great adventure, even if we don't agree over details and methods.

By the time the idea for *Heading Toward Omega* had jelled in Ring's mind, more than ten of Krishna's books had already been published, were stocked by the Kundalini Research Foundation, and were available to anyone requesting them, in most instances without delay and without charge. It is expected that scholars should thoroughly review the literature before embarking on any new writing project, as they stand on the shoulders of those who went before them.

Many professional scientists have experienced the frustration of being set upon, at one time or another, by amateurs who believe they have discovered the secret of the universe. As a rule, such persons are dismissed as crackpots, simply because they do not have the credentials, the discipline, and the tools, intellectual or otherwise, to make their "discovery" meaningful to science.

The exception to this rule is the genuine mystic, whose intuitive powers are generally appreciated by the learned. But even here, there is a big risk, because science has no way of identifying the charlatan. Anybody with a little imagination can write glowingly of "the liquid light flowing up my spine and cascading down my face, as my consciousness merges with the Infinite," etc. As Krishna wrote in "The Way to Self-Knowledge" (verses 275–276):

Not e'en a shadow of the thought
Of Victory should cross your mind,
When with the inner changes wrought
The coiled up power starts to unwind.

This is the sign which they must show
Who have attained the ecstatic state,
The Picture from their lips must flow
In language hard to imitate.

There are two ways to go about demonstrating the somatic basis of kundalini. Although they have been relegated to the back seat by writers on mysticism thus far, both are scientifically doable. The first is, of course, to show evidence of genius where there was none before. While anyone can describe the "mystical flights of the soul," no one can fake real genius, nor real talent. The second way is to verify that the operation of the reproductive system has been reversed.

This too can be observed and measured, for it is impossible that an activity of this nature can occur without leaving unmistakable traces. The constant absorption of the generative fluids and hormones into the visceral organs and their ascent into the brain as an ultra-subtle life-essence cannot leave the blood and the cerebrospinal fluid unaffected. There must be definite signs of it present in both (Krishna, 1975).

This now brings us to the work of the late Itzhak Bentov, to whom I did my best to describe every detail connected with the awakening of kundalini of which I was aware. I particularly emphasized that the whole process revolved around the reversal of the reproductive system, that in fact one could actually observe the sucking, pumping action in the region of the perineum immediately following a forceful arousal. It didn't require any electronic measuring devices, but only one's own eyes and a movie camera, provided the awakening were a powerful one.

I told Bentov that in the case of a spontaneous, full awakening, the reproductive organs begin producing copious amounts of semen (or erotic fluid in women), up to 10 to 12 times the amount that could be produced by the same person before the awakening. Bentov, who had been practicing Transcendental Meditation, replied that it all sounded too utterly fantastic to him to be believed.

I knew that practices such as Transcendental Meditation, which often lead to passive, somnolent, or quiescent states, indicated by an alpha rhythm, could sometimes bring visionary experiences or creative flashes, as in dreams. But I also knew they were not designed to awaken kundalini, and that was all the more reason for me to redouble my efforts to make the distinction between the two methods perfectly

clear to him. When his book, *Stalking the Wild Pendulum* (1977), was published, there was no sign that our meetings had produced the desired results. Bentov's publisher had earlier published Krishna's *The Awakening of Kundalini* (1975), which included a chapter on positive and negative views of meditation:

Passive states of mind [such as brought on by Transcendental Meditation] provide rest from tension and can, no doubt, have a curative and calming effect in a tense environment caused by today's complex life. But then, like sleep and hypnosis, they should be plainly labeled as such and not acclaimed as substitutes for Yoga or other active spiritual disciplines which are designed to lead to extended states of consciousness. . . . The alpha and theta states are the very antithesis of the attentive or concentrated states of mind essential for the evolution of the brain. (Krishna, 1975, p. 54)

In other words, if meditation is to be effective in arousing kundalini it has to be *active* in nature, and the mind has to be kept fully alert, focused only on one thought or image. This state of one-pointed attention and absorption is a prominent characteristic of the highly intelligent and talented mind.

The problem with Bentov's theory is that it really has little or nothing to do with kundalini. It may bear on certain symptoms arising from the practice of different kinds of meditation, but that is another subject altogether. Kundalini is the reversal of the reproductive system, brought about through various disciplines, although most generally through the practice of pranayama and the development of powerful concentration of the mind.

Scientists under Keith Wallace at Maharishi International University have been investigating their particular form of meditation, Transcendental Meditation, for almost two decades now, and other scientists, such as Herbert Benson at Harvard, have been doing the same thing. They have shown that many different physiological changes can be detected by ultrasensitive instruments during the course of meditation, or, for that matter, during almost any other activity, including sleep. But what they have not shown is that these particular changes have something to do with higher consciousness.

On the other hand, there are clear references in the words of the well-known Indian philosophers Abhinava Gupta and Shankaracharya to *urdhava retas*, the capacity gained by accomplished yogis to carry the reproductive essences into the *brahma randhra* in the brain, as stated above.

If the apparatus and method devised by Bentov to measure "kundalini activity" were capable of differentiating between a genius and

an ordinary person, then there would be some basis for the claims made for it. But that has not been shown. Nor is it clear to me whether any other scientist has ever replicated Bentov's experiments or whether any of his subjects had in fact actually activated kundalini. The claims of those who believe they have awakened kundalini are only subjective impressions and should not be accepted as proof that something significant has actually occurred.

Many of the symptoms associated with the Bentov physio-kundalini model are similar or identical to the kriyas reported by those who have experienced shaktipat. But as has become abundantly clear over the past two decades, very few, if any, of the individuals who have received shaktipat ever awakened kundalini or have anything tangible to show for it. The question of what shaktipat has to do with evolution has yet to be answered.

Twitches, shakes, spontaneous body movements, strange posturing, and other symptoms may or may not be associated with a genuine kundalini awakening. And since they are of such a minor nature, of such insignificance when compared with the real goal of the kundalini process—genius, transcendence, and illumination—they ought not be given any real importance.

Even as far back as 1973, as conservative a newspaper as *The New York Times* published an op-ed page article headlined "Beyond the Higher States of Consciousness," in which the following information appeared (Krishna, 1973, p. 23):

The all-inclusive nature of sex energy has not yet been correctly understood by psychologists. In fact, the very term reproductive, or sex, energy is a misnomer. Reproduction is but one of the aspects of the life energy, of which the other theater of activity is the brain. The cephalic activity is so slow and subtle as to be almost imperceptible. But this activity is the cause of genius, uncanny psychic powers, and also insanity.

Once this fact is empirically demonstrated, we come to a turning point in our present concepts about mind and consciousness—even about matter and the universe as a whole.

The first harvest of this change will be the beginning of a new science dealing with subtle intelligent energies in the cosmos. When this happens, the gigantic physical world—now dominating the whole mental horizon of science—will be relegated to its proper position. It is but the visible peak of an infinite creation, of which the unbounded major part is sunk below the surface of the space-time ocean, forever hidden from the sight of man.

It is only in higher states of consciousness that a fragment of the submerged portion comes into view, causing a state of wonder and exhilaration that is beyond description. It is only when the evolving

human organism and the cosmos are viewed in right perspective that the appropriate ways of life and conduct, favorable for this transformation, can be devised by science.

We stand today at a crossroads, a cosmic drama unfolding before our very eyes. For the first time in history, we are coming in direct contact with the hidden intelligent forces of nature, not all of which may be our moral superiors. Just as we have malignant forces in the physical world, so too can we be certain that they exist in the spiritual world. It is extremely important, however, that we do not yield to superstition. Carl Jung was right that the gods do dwell within, and that is one more reason why it is imperative that we obtain the right interpretation of the ancient esoteric texts and religious scriptures. For when it comes to the gods within, it is easy to be misled.

The cerebrospinal system is still in a state of evolutionary transition. Surrounding and permeating the gross tissues of the body is a living electricity, acting *intelligently and purposefully, controlling the activity of every molecule of living matter*. It carries the life principle from one place to the other, energizes, renovates, and purifies the neurons and maintains the life-giving subtle area of the body in the same way as the blood maintains the grosser part.

Even holy sages, O Mother, who have completely purged their mind of worldly attachment, with their intellects over-awed (by Thy Splendor) are never able to gain the smallest bit of knowledge concerning Thee. (*Panchastavi*, 1976, Canto v. 24)

Our myths, from the heavenly war in Revelation to the war between science and religious fundamentalism, have revolved around the issue of human evolution. What, after all, was the reason for the break between the Archangel Michael and Lucifer if not their opposing views on evolution? Lucifer wanted humanity to know the secret; Michael did not. For if he had, we would surely have discovered it before now. And so, according to John, "there was war in heaven," and that Old Serpent, the devil, was cast out.

But the Serpent surfaced again in the Garden of Eden, urging our primal parents to partake of the Forbidden Fruit:

And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest ye die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:2-5)

The next great battle will be fought over the minds of people, and whoever takes control of the media will have already won the war. Seventy years ago high school biology teacher John Thomas Scopes was ordered not to teach the theory of evolution. The resulting "Scopes Monkey Trial" soon became front-page news around the world, ample testimony that people *are* interested in evolution. The old "Aquarian Conspirators" have failed to carry the torch into the New Age. Now it is time for new voices to be heard.

With the stakes so astronomically high, those who know about kundalini must speak out. Some editors may say there is no pressing interest because evolution operates on such a vast time scale. That is nonsense: if kundalini were nothing more, it surely is the great compressor of time. It can do in one lifetime what ordinarily would take eons to accomplish.

Sociobiologists Charles Lumsden and Edward O. Wilson have sounded the battle cry:

How the last step of megaevolution was attained is a mystery of surpassing importance. Its mere contemplation brings together some of the central questions of biology and philosophy. Armed with scientific insight we can ask again with rising hopes: what is humankind, what created us, and what is our purpose in the world? The search for the origin of mind is more than just another exercise in philosophy. It goes to the heart of all of our assumptions about ethics, polity, and social purpose. (1983, p. 7)

The doctrine of kundalini answers to the Promethean fire. The benefits of knowing even a little bit about the Serpent Power are incalculable. One need not strive to become an illuminated genius in order to reap great rewards. According to Krishna, when the laws about kundalini are known, the life span of humans will increase to as much as 150 years, out of which the greater part will be for our enjoyment and the exercise of all our faculties; just *knowing* about kundalini is enough to increase the flow of prana into the brain.

Nettlesome social problems like abortion will be resolved when the doctrine of kundalini is established. Theologians, philosophers, and thinkers of every description have struggled for centuries to determine what is morally right and what is morally wrong. In the future, the question will be framed more productively: i.e., what accelerates the healthy, harmonious process of kundalini, and what retards it? In other words, thoughts and acts harmful to the kundalini process will be considered "sinful," and vice versa.

In the not-too-distant future, our political, spiritual, and educational leaders will come to know the evolutionary target set for humanity,

and they will also know the best means to approach it. Our job in the interim is to join the battle against inertia, apathy, and ignorance. While there are still many kundalini secrets to be discovered, enough is known to give us the fighting edge in any debate with those manning the reactionary ramparts of the status quo.

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