

## **Kundalini Yoga : Awakening the Kundalini Energy**

**Padam Singh**

Shri Radha krishan Inter College, Usfar, Mathura.

Kundalini Yoga is a style of Yoga that concentrates on the awakening of the energy that is found at the base of our spine. For that reason, Kundalini Yoga is said to be the most powerful form of Yoga known today. This energy is said to take the form of a coiled snake, hence the name "kundalini", which is Sanskrit for "coiled up". The goal of Kundalini Yoga is to awaken this "snake" and send it moving up your spine all the way to your brain, which is believed to result in a sublime state of ecstasy and awareness. Kundalini Yoga was introduced to the West by Yogi Bhajan in 1969. The practice of Kundalini Yoga includes Yoga Poses and Meditation, but focuses more on Chanting or Mantra and Pranayama.

Once the Kundalini (the energy in the form of a snake) is awakened, it passes through the different Chakras, or centers of consciousness, that are thought to reside in the human body. There are a total of seven chakras, each providing a certain power or experience when stimulated. For more information, read our section on the Seven Chakras.

To understand the movement of Kundalini better, you must have adequate knowledge of the Nervous System, particularly the spinal cord. This is because the Seven Chakras are believed to be found in this area of the body.

So how can the Kundalini in your body be awakened? This can be done through the practice of Asanas, Pranayama, and Mantras:

- Concentration and training of the mind
- The practice of Hatha Yoga, Bhakta Yoga, and Jnana Yoga
- Selflessness and intellectual inquiry
- The help of a guru
- Of the above mentioned methods, the last one is said to be the most important. Trying to awaken your Kundalini by force and without the aid of a guru can be dangerous. This can result in some symptoms such as:
  - Mental confusion
  - Headache or the feeling of something heavy in your head
  - Psychosis
  - Intense mood swings

- Epilepsy or other involuntary body movements
- Stress
- Depression
- Irregular breathing
- Immoral behavior

Therefore, the Kundalini must never be awakened by force. Like a real snake, it can and will strike you if you provoke it. And like a professional snake handler, the guru will guide you on how to tame this snake and deal with it properly.

Actually, awakening your Kundalini should not take a lot of effort. The only things you need are patience, perseverance, and devotion to your practice. Once it is awakened, you will feel various pleasurable and less pleasurable experiences. The pleasant ones may be tickling sensations along the Spinal Cord, bursts of joy, and even transcendental visions. The less enjoyable kind may come in the form of trembling, waves of heat, pains in the areas of the different Chakras, tingling sensations and nervousness. Some yogis say that an awakened Kundalini is the beginning of the path leading to Enlightenment.

Perhaps it is because of the things mentioned here that Kundalini Yoga has come to be called the most powerful Yoga ever known. Some even call it as the mother of all **Styles of Yoga**. Its effects can be very powerful and beneficial, but can also be vicious if not handled correctly.

### **The Powerful Science of Kundalini Yoga**

#### **Para-Sympathetic And Sympathetic System**

On either side of the spinal cord run the sympathetic and para-sympathetic cords, a double chain of ganglia. Ganglia means a collection of nerve-cells. These constitute the Autonomic System which supplies nerves to the involuntary organs, such as heart, lungs, intestines, kidneys, liver, etc., and controls them. *Vagus* nerve which plays a vital part in human economy comes out of this sympathetic system. Sympathetic system stimulates or accelerates. Para-sympathetic system retards or inhibits. There are nerves to dilate or expand the arteries which carry pure oxygenated blood to nourish the tissues, organs and cells of different parts of the body. These are called *Vaso-dilators*. The left and the right sympathetic chains are connected by filaments. These cross from the right to the left side and *vice versa*, but the exact places where these crosses are not known, though several have attempted to find. M'Kendrick and Snodgrass in their *Physiology of the Senses* write: "Where the sensory fibres cross from one side to the other is not known ..... In some parts of the spinal cord the sensory fibres do cross from the right to left side and *vice versa*."

**Nadis** are not nerves but rather channels for the flow of consciousness. The literal meaning of nadi is 'flow'. Just as the negative and positive forces of electricity flow through complex circuits, in the same way, pram shako (vital force) and manas shako

(mental force) flow through every part of our body via these nadis. According to the tantras there are 72,000 or more such channels or networks through which the stimuli flow like an electric current from one point to another.

### **Functions and Activities**

Nadis are thought to carry a life force energy known as prana in Sanskrit, or qi in Chinese-based systems. In particular prana (*active*) is supposed to circulate inside Pingala, while apana (*passive*) is supposed to circulate inside Ida. Inside Sushumna is supposed to circulate kundalini when awakened.<sup>[3]</sup> The Ida and Pingala nadis are often seen as referring to the two hemispheres of the brain. Pingala is the extroverted (Active), solar nadi, and corresponds to the right hand side of the body and the left hand side of the brain. Ida is the introverted, lunar nadi, and corresponds to the left hand side of the body and the right hand side of the brain (crossing occurs in the optical chiasma). These nadis are also said to have an extrasensory function, playing a part in empathic and instinctive responses. The two nadis are believed to be stimulated through different practices, including Pranayama, which involves alternate breathing through left and right nostrils, which would alternately stimulate respectively the left and right sides of the brain. The word *nadi* comes from the Sanskrit root *nad* meaning "channel", "stream", or "flow". The rhythmical breathing and special breathing techniques are supposed to influence the flow of these nadis or *energetic currents*. According to this kind of interpretation (which is the Yoga interpretation) the breathing techniques will purify and develop these two energetic currents and will lead to breathing special exercises whose goal is to awake kundalini.

Chakras, as described above, are energy centers along the spine located at major branchings of the human nervous system, beginning at the base of the spinal column and moving upward to the top of the skull, through which pass 3 major energy channels, Sushumna, Ida and Pingala. Chakras are considered to be a point or nexus of biophysical energy or prana of the human body. Shumsky states that "prana is the basic component of your subtle body, your energy field, and the entire chakra system...the key to life and source of energy in the universe."<sup>[5]</sup>

The following seven primary chakras are commonly described:

**Muladhara** (Sanskrit: मूलाधार, Mūlādhāra,) Base or Root Chakra (ovaries/prostate)

**Swadhisthana** (Sanskrit: Svādhiṣṭhāna,) Sacral Chakra (last bone in spinal cord, the coccyx)

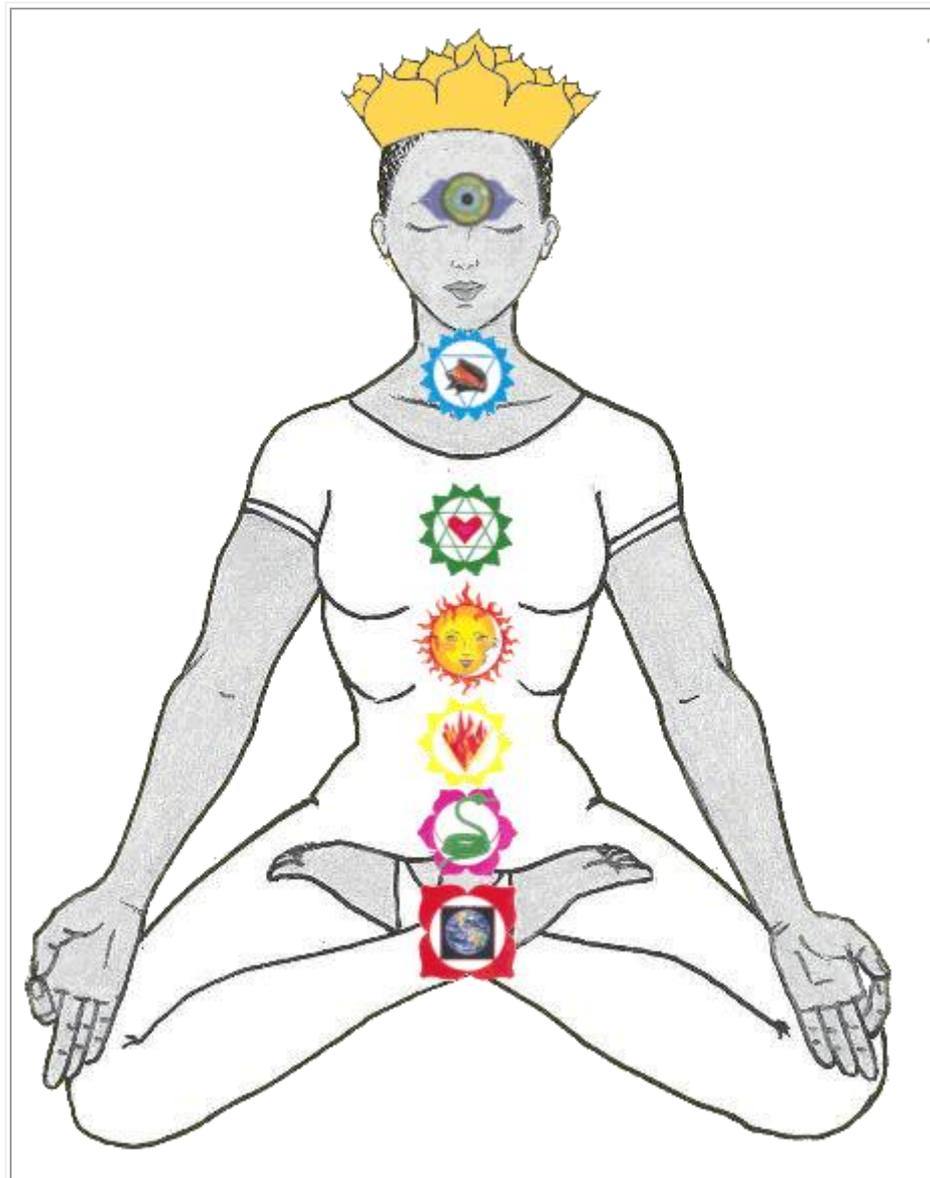
**Manipura** (Sanskrit:., Maṇipūra,) Solar Plexus Chakra (navel area)

**Anahata** (Sanskrit: अनाहत, Anāhata,) Heart Chakra (heart area)

**Vishuddha** (Sanskrit: विशुद्ध, Viśuddha,) Throat Chakra (throat and neck area)

**Ajna** (Sanskrit: आज्ञा, Ājñā,) Brow or Third Eye Chakra (pineal gland or third eye)

**Sahasrara** (Sanskrit: सहस्रार, Sahasrāra, b) Crown Chakra (top of the head; 'soft spot' of a newborn)



### How to Change the Flow In Nadis

The following exercises are for changing the flow from Ida to Pingala. Select any one of the methods that suits you best. For changing the flow from Pingala to Ida, just do the same exercise on the opposite side:

1. Plug the left nostril with a small piece of cotton or fine cloth for a few minutes.
2. Lie down on the left side for ten minutes.
3. Sit erect. Draw the left knee up and keep the left heel near the left buttock. Now press the left arm-pit, *Axilla*, on the knee. In a few seconds the flow will be through Pingala.
4. Keep the two heels together near the right buttock. The right knee will be over the left knee. Keep the left palm on the ground a foot away and let the weight of the trunk rest on the left hand. Do not bend at the elbow. Turn the head also towards the left side. This is an effective method. Catch hold of the left ankle with the right hand.
5. The flow of breath can be changed by Nauli Kriya also.
6. There are some who are able to change the flow by will.
7. Place the *Yoga Danda* or *Hamsa Danda* (a wooden stick of about 2 feet in length with a rest of the shape of U at one end) at the left arm-pit and lean on it by the left side.
8. The most effective and instantaneous result is produced in changing the flow through Khechari Mudra. The Yogi turns the tongue inside and blocks the air passage by the tip of the tongue.

### Other Nadis

Gandhari, Hastajihva, Kuhu, Sarasvati, Pusha, Sankhini, Payasvini, Varuni, Alambusha, Vishvodhara, Yarasvini, etc., are some other important Nadis. These have their origin in Kanda. All these Nadis are placed on the sides of Sushumna, Ida and Pingala, and proceed to different parts of the body to perform certain special functions. These are all subtle Nadis. Innumerable minor Nadis spring from these. As the leaf of the *Asvattha* tree is covered with minute fibres so also, this body is permeated with thousands of Nadis.

### The Brain

Brain and cranial nerves are the chief parts of the whole nervous system. It is a mass of nervous tissues made up of soft grey and white matter. It occupies the whole of cranium. Cranium is like the iron safe to keep up the treasure 'brain'. It is surrounded by three membranes or *Meninges*, viz., (1) *dura mater*, the fibrous connective tissue by the side of the cranial bones; (2) *pia mater*, the connective tissue containing a network of blood vessels, which penetrates and nourishes all the parts of the brain; and (3) *arachnoid*, a very fine membrane around the brain. Below the *arachnoid* there is the space which contains the cerebro-spinal fluid that is intended to prevent any injury to the brain. The brain looks as if it is floating on this liquid.

The brain can be divided into two halves, right and left hemispheres, by a central *Sulcus* or tissue. There are several lobes or smaller portions in the brain such as the parietal and temporal lobes on the sides, the occipital lobe at the posterior portion of cerebellum, etc. There are many convolutions or *Gyre* in every lobe. Again, for the sake of study, we can divide the brain into four sections.

1. *Cerebrum*: It is the anterior, oval-shaped larger part of the brain. It is situated in the upper portion of the cranial cavity. This contains the important centres of hearing, speech, sight, etc. The pineal gland which is regarded as the seat of the soul and which plays a prominent part in Samadhi and psychic phenomena is situated here.

2. *Cerebellum*, the little or hind brain: This is the main portion of the brain, oblong-shaped, situated just above the fourth ventricle and below and behind the brain. Here the grey matter is arranged over the white matter. It regulates the muscular co-ordination. Mind rests here during dreams.

3. *Medulla Oblongata*: It is the beginning place of the spinal cord at the cranial cavity, where it is oblong-shaped and wide. It is between the two hemispheres. Here the white matter is placed over the grey matter. This contains the centres of important functions such as circulatory, respiratory, etc. This portion must be carefully protected.

4. *Pons Varolii*: It is the bridge that lies before the *Medulla Oblongata*. It is made of white and grey fibres that come from *cerebellum* and *medulla*. This is the junction where cerebellum and medulla meet.

There are five ventricles of the brain. The fourth is the most important one. It is situated in *Medulla Oblongata*. The fourth ventricle is the name of the central canal of the spinal cord, "*Canalis Centralis*" when it enters the cranial cavity. Here the tiny canal becomes bigger in size.

Every nerve of the body is closely connected with the brain. The 12 pairs of cranial nerves proceed from both hemispheres through the openings at the base of the skull to different parts of the body: Olfactory; Optic; Motor Oculi; Pathetic; Trifacial; Abducens; Facial; Auditory; Glossopharyngeal; Pneumogastric, Spinal accessory; and Hypo-glossal. These are the nerves that are connected with the eye, ear, tongue, nose, pharynx, thorax, etc. For a detailed study of this section refer to any book on anatomy. Here I have given you portions that are connected with Kundalini Yoga.

### **Is Kundalini Yoga Dangerous?**

#### **Dangers of Kundalini Awakening**

Is Kundalini Yoga dangerous? Kundalini Yoga is certainly a powerful science and if not approached with intelligence and respect it can produce some challenges and difficulties for the practitioners. That is not meant to discourage you from taking up its practice, it is meant to help guide you so that you undertake Kundalini Yoga practice safely and thus, enjoy the enormous benefits that this form of yoga.

Kundalini Yoga is favored over other forms of yoga, because of the rapid gains that can be made by those who practice it sincerely. What this means in practical terms, is that Kundalini Yoga can more quickly purify your energetic channels, charge and balance your chakras (energy centers) and awaken in you greater and greater flow on kundalini shakti (energy), than other forms of yoga. Thus, it is the fast track to spiritual growth and enlightenment. This is great, but herein also lies the danger. Improper Kundalini Yoga, coupled with incorrect lifestyle and preparation, can unleash more energy in you than you are ready for. This premature awakening of kundalini or excessive flow of shakti (energy), before the body is ready to handle it, is the danger with improper Kundalini Yoga practice, or with kundalini shakti in general. The reasons for kundalini awakening are vast and varied, and sometimes have nothing to do with yoga practice at all.

Below are these important guidelines to help you minimize the danger of premature kundalini awakening and thus, avoid the problems that this condition can sometimes cause.

### **Guidelines for Safe Kundalini Yoga Practice:**

#### **1. Don't Over Strain:**

This is rule number one for minimizing the danger of premature kundalini awakening by ensuring you are not going further than what your body is ready for. This applies to the practice of all forms of yoga. Whether you are doing yoga breathing exercises (pranayama), yoga poses (asanas) or kundalini yoga sets (kriyas), you should not push excessively. Of course some challenge is good, but you are looking to develop your capacity systematically, so keep that in mind and aim for steady progress.

Two more important safety notes when it comes to doing your Kundalini Yoga practice. First, be sure to warm up before doing any difficult kriyas (sets) or asanas (postures). Second, be sure to work around injuries and use modifications for advanced poses whenever necessary.

#### **2. Don't Do Excessive Chakra Meditations:**

I constantly have yogis reaching out to me, both online and at my studio, who have focused exclusively on Chakra Meditations and thus, created imbalances for themselves. I have given some powerful Chakra Meditation techniques in the following 2 articles, [The Top 3 Chakra Meditation Techniques](#) and the very popular [AUM Mantra Meditation for Opening the Third Eye Chakra](#), and although, I expect you to learn and use these techniques, I have advised that they should not be the only focus of your Kundalini Yoga practice.

#### **3. Danger of Using Drugs:**

Unless you are a wandering naked sadhu (Naga Yogi) or a developed Aghori (see article [Nude Yoga Exposed](#)), it is very unlikely you are a master of how to use narcotics. The

techniques of how to prepare, mix and use narcotics (and certain rare herbs) for awakening kundalini, is still held in great secrecy and if you want to learn this alchemy, you are going to have to take a trip to India and get initiated. There are other ancient religions that also know some of these secrets but most of that knowledge is also not easily available. stay away from drugs all-together.

#### **4. Get Healthy First:**

Before jumping into any advanced Kundalini Yoga practice, you should first try to heal yourself from any serious diseases or illnesses. Of course, yoga itself is very helpful in this matter so one should not jump ahead to doing advanced yoga if you are suffering from serious health issues. Resolving the health issues should be a priority and during this healing phase, only use gentle yoga techniques instead. This will minimize the danger of complicating your health issues with kundalini imbalances.

In addition to practicing gentle yoga to help heal yourself, you should employ Ayurvedic

#### **5. Make Time & Space:**

Kundalini awakening is not a predicable process. It affects each of us differently and it is advisable to give yourself time and space to allow this process to run it's course when required. You need to join an ashram, but I am saying that if you have awakened kundalini, then there will be times you need to just rest, relax and be alone. By not providing such down times, you increase the danger of imbalances as kundalini is not able to complete the work she is doing within you.

#### **6. Attitude of Gratitude & Prayer:**

Don't underestimate the value of right attitude when it comes to eliminating the danger that kundalini shakti can pose as she awakens. It is perhaps the best tool at your disposal, to help you make safe and graceful progress on the path of full kundalini awakening. Be respectful, appreciative, devoted and humble and the great Shakti, as well as the Universe, will cooperate with you. Here is a nice vedic mantra to express your love and devotion, but feel free to use your own methods as well. In addition, before doing your Kundalini Yoga practice always start by asking for protection, guidance and inspiration. This ensures you are approaching these cosmic forces with the correct state of mind and heart.

### **References**

1. [www.kundaliniyoga.org](http://www.kundaliniyoga.org)
2. [www.yoga-age.com](http://www.yoga-age.com)
3. [www.pubmed.com](http://www.pubmed.com)
4. [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

5. Selby, Jon and Selig, Zachary. (1992) Kundalini Awakening, a Gentle Guide to Chakra Activation and Spiritual Growth, New York: Rando
6. Siri Datta Open Your Heart with Kundalini Yoga Thorson.(2003),p.27.