

IS YOUR KUNDALINI AWAKENING?

by Lawrence Edwards, PhD

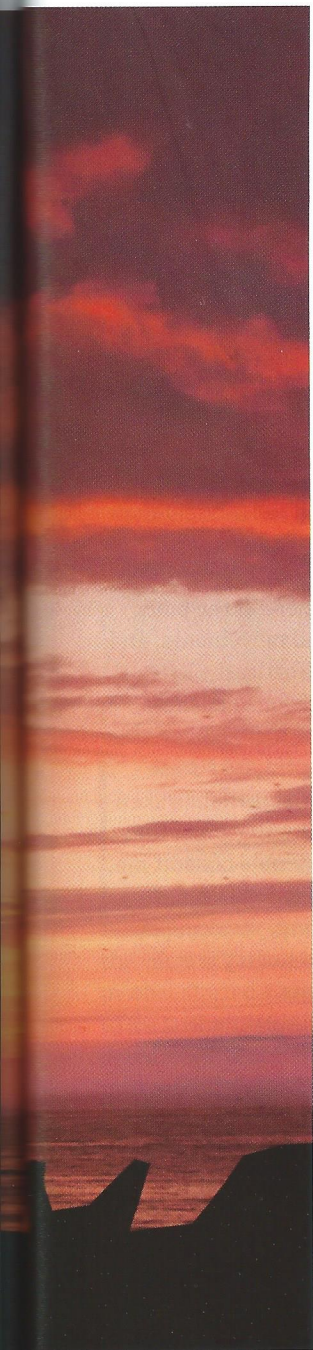


Maybe you didn't know you had a Kundalini! This ancient Sanskrit term refers to your innate power of consciousness for awakening to the direct experience of the Divine in everyday life. Millions of people are seeking spiritual awakening in a variety of ways – through meditation, dance, music, prayer, drugs, chants, ancient practices and even through electronic devices. For millennia the yogic systems have mapped the great expanse of Consciousness and developed systematic methods for attaining full awareness of our highest nature.

Many of these practices, including mantras, breath work, postures, and visualizations are picked up by seekers and used outside of the integrated disciplines in which they are meant to be practiced, and even then, only under the guidance of a skilled and selfless adept. The results can be frightening for the mind unprepared to deal with the intrusion of transpersonal phenomena and may be disintegrative rather than

creating a higher level of integration. My latest book, *Awakening Kundalini: The Path to Radical Freedom* (Sounds True 2013), along with the 7.5 hour audio program of the same name, guides people through the mysterious processes of awakening in ways that lead to greater integration of the extraordinary power, love and ecstasy that we are capable of.

It is very important to understand what Kundalini is in order to understand what Kundalini awakening entails. Let's try this exercise: take a moment to relax, perhaps take a few slow, deep breaths, easing your mind, allowing it to settle. As the mind settles, your attention can shift from



the things of the mind to the awareness that illumines the mind. Thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, fantasies all leap into the sky of awareness like fireworks in the night sky. Like the sky, awareness is boundless, an infinite expanse that contains the mind and transcends the mind. Letting go of the mind and its thoughts, allow your attention to rest on that space of Awareness, a boundless spaciousness of Being.... Now imagine the Divine with unlimited creative power as transcendent, pure Consciousness, infinitely beyond the mind – and imagine as It

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begins to create all that is within the boundless spaciousness of Its Divine Being. It first opens a dark void within Itself, filled with limitless potential, the womb of all creation, transcending time and space. Within that dark expanse a spark appears. This spark is the seed of mind, of your mind, of every mind, the archetypal seed of individuality and all forms of existence. From this spark grows the light of your individual consciousness. Instantly the Divine coalesces further to form space and sound, thoughts and feelings, your individuality, and all you think yourself to be. In the same instant, Infinite Consciousness further contracts and solidifies into your body and the world it inhabits – a world of your creation that will mirror what you seek, what you wish to avoid, and who you think you are. The Infinite has become the finite, all forms made from Its own pure Being. The Divine’s true nature,

your true nature, is hidden, like the immense nuclear energy bound and invisible, yet present in all matter. Your Divine Self awaits the time in your soul’s journey for that Power of Consciousness to expand once again and know Itself in Its all-encompassing Infinitude!

This Universal Power of Consciousness is known as Kundalini in the yogic tradition. Others call her Holy Spirit, the Great Mother, Kali, and countless other names. She is depicted as the feminine face of the Divine because it is Kundalini who gives birth to all forms, all matter. She creates your mind, body, spirit and the world of experience out of Herself. She creates your subtle body with its countless energy channels called nadis, and the centers of consciousness known as chakras. She creates the prana, the energy of Consciousness that flows through the nadis giving life to the body and mind.

Pranic energy is one limited form of energy created by Kundalini. Prana moves the mind and the mind moves prana. Prana circulates through the physical and subtle bodies in various ways, with the breath being the most easily grasped. Prana is like the common energy of fire and heat, while

Kundalini is like the nuclear energy of the stars. Kundalini’s vast power remains in a state of quiescence until the individual is ready to know the Infinite.

There is a great deal of confusion about Kundalini that stems from mistaking the effects of prana for the effects of Kundalini. Prana is one of Kundalini’s creations, as is the mind. Prana and mind are intimately connected. Meditators, yogis and practitioners of many traditions learn to calm the mind by calming the breath and using other yogic practices. Quieting the prana and its movements by regulating the breath works to still the mind/body and free it of old patterns. People often inaccurately assume that they are working with Kundalini when they are actually working with prana. You can light a match and hold a stick of fire in your hand, but you won’t have harnessed the nuclear energy of the sun. You can work with prana and not be influencing Kundalini at all. The effects of working with prana can still be exceptionally powerful and beneficial for mind/body health as much of the current research on yoga and meditation is showing. However, the mind, whose entire power is but a tiny spark of the creative energy underlying it, can’t simply force Kundalini into activation.

Unfortunately some traditional yogic approaches to Kundalini emphasize power and control, while attempting to force the activation of Kundalini through potent breathing techniques and other methods. This type of approach often creates the negative symptoms of Kundalini awakening that people read about. If you poke, prod and hammer Kundalini, what kind of response should you expect? The renowned Kundalini master, Swami Muktananda (1908-1982), under whose direction I had the good fortune to practice for years, always treated Her as the great Goddess. The enlightened 8th century sage of Advaita Vedanta, Shankaracharya, wrote the highest praise of Kundalini and instructed that she be approached with love and devotion.

Traditional yogic approaches to Kundalini often reflect a patriarchal “dominator mode” of consciousness as author Riane Eisler calls it in *The Chalice and the Blade*. Eisler demonstrates how the fall of peaceful cultures that had existed for

MEET THE AUTHOR

LAWRENCE EDWARDS has been teaching meditation and Kundalini practices for more than four decades. He has studied under masters of yoga and Tibetan Buddhism in addition to training in Jungian psychology. He is the President of the Kundalini Research Network, Founder and Director of the non-profit Anam Cara Meditation

Foundation, www.anamcarafoundation.org, and author of several works on meditation, Kundalini and spiritual transformation. His website has resources related to Kundalini, spiritual development and spiritual emergence crisis. His clinical practice is in Armonk, NY and he has been on the faculty of New York Medical College since 1998. He is consulted by



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30,000 years worshipping the Goddess coincided with a shift to male images of the Divine, patriarchal dominance and the degradation of the feminine. Goddess figures went from being supremely powerful objects of adoration and embodiments of the mysteries of life and death, to servants of male Gods and men. Women became possessions to be used, dominated, and distrusted for the oppressed power they maintained. Women of power went from being viewed as priestesses of the Great Goddess to witches of the underworld.

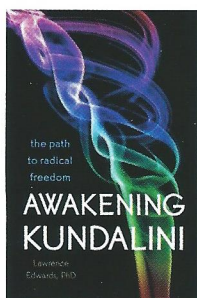
Symbols of the Divine Feminine, like the serpent, also a symbol of Kundalini, went from being revered to being despised and feared. In a similar way Kundalini has been viewed by many male priests and yogis as a lower power to be forced into submission, feared if she broke free, and yet sought after as the key to ultimate liberation. Fortunately, living traditions of worshipping and honoring the Goddess in Her various forms as Kundalini, Kali, the Great Mother, and many more continue to thrive in the East and West to this day, keeping her wisdom accessible. Wisdom herself is another form of the Goddess – Sophia. The brilliant British Jungian analyst and author, Anne Baring, has written a superb book on this subject titled: *The Dream of the Cosmos: A Quest for the Soul*.

Within what you consider yourself to be – your mind, body and spirit – lies this boundless power of wisdom and creativity, Kundalini. One aspect of Kundalini is already fully functioning – keeping every cell of your body alive, powering the mind to think, imagine, remember, forget, and to identify with the roles you play and the relationships you are in. From this non-dual yogic perspective you presently, right now, completely embody the Divine. She is every atom, every cell, everything that you think makes up who you are. She is your mind, your consciousness and all that is beyond them. You are her sublime organ of perception for knowing the universe as you. She delights in herself as you!

Awakening to full knowledge of your Universal Self is the gift of complete Kundalini transformation. Your body isn't just the body holding this magazine. Your body encompasses all bodies, all forms. Your body is the universe. As your true Self, you know yourself

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FURTHER READING
AWAKENING KUNDALINI: The Path to Radical Freedom by Lawrence Edwards, PhD, published by Sounds True, Paperback (304 pages). Also available: Awakening Kundalini: The Path to Radical Freedom audio learning course, Six-CD set (7 hours, 30 mins).



as galaxies and stars, bacteria and microbes, crystals and clouds, living beings and grains of sand.

You are the Divine *being the universe*. Kundalini is your power to create the universe and to know both limitation and infinitude. You are familiar with what it is to be bound and limited to your body and mind. Through Kundalini awakening you will discover what it is to be radically free, unbounded, one with the Infinite. Kundalini is your true Self's power of revelation and transformation. It's not the ego's power, but the power of the Self. Yogis practiced austerities for life times to have this inner power begin its spontaneous expansion which marks the beginning of true Kundalini Yoga (not a brand name).

This ancient Kundalini Yoga results from the spontaneous unfolding of Kundalini that directs all the yogic and meditative processes from within, moving the mind and body through kriyas. Kriyas are literally movements of Kundalini that can bring about rocking and swaying of the body, rushes of energy like electricity or heat in the body, automatic yogic breathing, mudras – hand movements, and asanas – yogic postures, all happening effortlessly. Kriyas can take the form of shifts in states of consciousness, visions and transcendent experiences that will reshape your entire mind and your experience of the world. It is these kriyas that are often seen as the signs of the initial awakening of Kundalini. They can be quite challenging when they erupt spontaneously, which is often why people consult me. Kriyas can be generated by spiritual awakening through many different traditions. Shaking, quaking, speaking in tongues, ecstatic states of union, inspired poetry are all effects that are common to many traditions.

What's confusing is that many kriya-like phenomena can be created by movements of dysregulated prana or even by medical disorders. It's always prudent to have symptoms checked out medically. Misinterpreting a medical disorder as Kundalini can be dangerous. People often ask me if there's a conclusive way of knowing if something is Kundalini related. There's no definitive test for whether or not one's Kundalini is awakened and unfolding. There are classic signs that I discuss in my book, along with non-ego directed transformative processes that continue for years and even life times!

This nuclear energy of yoga is not to be trifled with. Awakening Kundalini transforms every aspect of one's life. My doctoral research on Kundalini in 1985-86 showed that people who had gone through Kundalini awakening, and the ensuing processes of transformation for 10 years or more, had profound changes in relationships, work, sense of self, attitudes, beliefs, and health. They came to know the Divine as the Self within others, within the world and within themselves. The real goal of Kundalini's transformative work is to open our capacity for boundless compassion, wisdom, love and kindness that we can bring into this world every moment of every day.

My journey of awakening started in this life as a small child, which I wrote about in my book, *The Soul's Journey: Guidance from the Divine Within*. It evolved into direct experiences of Kundalini's grace and union with the Infinite. The lessons I've learned over several decades, and practices for safely awakening and integrating the transformative power of Kundalini are shared in *Awakening Kundalini: The Path to Radical Freedom*.

Blessings on your journey! 