

Kundalini Shaktipat

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The term "Shakti" is very popular today, but is usually misunderstood. Shakti can be understood by thinking about electricity. The fan will function as long as electricity powers it; the moment electricity is withdrawn, it stops working and become useless. The same is true of humans. We are alive as long as Shakti powers us. The moment Shakti life force withdraws, we die.

When Cosmic Energy or Universal Shakti comes into contact with Its residual Shakti, called Kundalini, hitherto lying dormant in the individual, It awakens, activating the sleeping Kundalini. The awakening of Kundalini is a sure sign of active Shakti (although even in its inactive state it still supplies the energy that keeps us alive). The individual consciously feels the oneness of one's own Shakti Kundalini with the Universal Shakti, just as a drop of water feels the union when it contacts the ocean. With the rising of the serpent power or Kundalini comes the intuitive knowledge that there is no death. When this happens, the inner state of the aspirant quickly changes; there is calmness, an inner contentment, and a synchronicity with life not present before. Accumulated karma from other lifetimes gradually loses its potency until all karmic debt dissolves. The practitioner then experiences Shakti active within him/her as an all-encompassing, expansive energy. The body of the practitioner becomes the entire cosmos as the cosmos and the practitioner complement each other. Practitioners experience a unified, eternal flow of life force or energy circulating between them and Universal Consciousness. The physical limits of the practitioner now extend to the cosmic level and all distances come within his/her reach; one's third eye is opened, so that other dimensions can be seen and travel to higher realms becomes a reality. One begins to live fully and become totally awake for the first time. At this level, the Self-Realized person can do anything on earth except the Divine processes of creation, preservation and destruction. A kind of "mechanical switch" develops enabling the person to live either in this world or another world, if and when one likes.

Traditionally, Kundalini energy can be awakened through three main practices: Asanas (yogic postures), mudras (hand positions), and pranayama (breath-control exercises)

Kundalini Shaktipat - Grace of the Guru

The accumulated results of devotional practices through several lifetimes.

For the first set of practices, there are several rules to be adhered to for the energy to rise. One has to learn unnatural yogic postures, mudras, and breath control practices of Hatha Yoga. These may not be easy for everyone, and having embarked on the path of learning these postures and mudras there is no certainty how long the person will have to practice before Kundalini rises and the person "awakes." For this reason finding a Guru and receiving his/her grace is helpful; then there is no need for rules or regulations.

Awakening Kundalini through the grace of a Guru is traditionally seen as the best and most natural way of stirring this energy. When Kundalini energy awakens through the grace of the Guru, yogic postures, mudras, and breath control exercises do not need to be performed in an unnatural way. Rather, everything unfolds by itself according to the individual's karmic history. Awakening through the grace of the Guru is sure and quick, although finding a Guru is not so easy. When the consciousness of the inner and the external Guru is integrated, the external or

physical Guru is not needed for awakening. Where it is not possible to receive grace from a Guru then the first set of practices can work but may be slower.

Using examples we can compare the three methods of awakening. The first method is comparable to someone who works very hard, tolerates the sun and heat of the day, working relentlessly to earn a living. The second method is similar to receiving great wealth from a rich person through an act of compassion. The third method is comparable to suddenly discovering wealth on the way home or while sitting at home, it is instant and without too much effort. Whatever the method, those who have had successful Kundalini Awakening can be recognized by their healthy body, happy countenance, appearance of anahat-shabd or the "inner sound" known as AUM or WORD, beautiful, peaceful eyes, becoming an urdhvareta or one in whom the reversal of the flow of semen has taken place or the one who has attained the power of retaining the semen, and the purification of body and nerves.

In my own experience, when the Kundalini awakened I felt extra activities in my testicles, a squeezing sensation that seemed to be directing some fluid upward to the brain through unseen capillaries. Sexual arousal passes on to other parts of the body as sublimated energy. There is a cooling down and an upsurge of pure love for every one (Swami Muktananda and Pundit Gopi Krishna have described similar experiences in their books. Female practitioners have reported similar experiences, for example, a college professor and Siddha-Yoga practitioner, Karen felt energy rocket up from the first chakra (Mooladhara) at times, causing her whole body to vibrate and shake. In the case of Beth, from Arkansas, there was often a sucking sensation around the cervix, as if vaginal fluid was needed by the energy (Greenwell 1990, p. 203). Thus, whether the person is male or female, it seems that vital sexual fluids are used to enrich and strengthen the brain making it strong enough to receive enlightenment.

KUNDALINI SHAKTIPAT OR MAHA-YOGA

Kundalini Maha-Yoga is a self-proven and self-perfecting spiritual practice. The power of Kundalini can cause an initiate to perform kriyas (automatic movements) through the power of Kundalini itself. The force of the Kundalini is such that the body performs these asanas unconsciously. Another name is Siddha-yoga, or the self-proven path of meditation. In all aspects, body, mind and intellect, Shakti uses Kundalini to perform the meditation. The initiate is drawn into flowing with the energy and must surrender to the process. When and how Kundalini-Shakti manifests is the work of the divine power (Shakti) Itself. To practice Siddha Yoga one must allow the divine power the opportunity to perform the meditation and yogic postures without interference.

Traditionally, it is believed that without initiation it is difficult to realize the fruits of knowledge, meditation, yoga, japa (chanting), tapa (austerities), devotion, karma, and dharma (religious duties). Kundalini Maha-Yoga (Shaktipat) as a path of initiation is different from other paths of meditation and/or initiation, because on other paths one has to learn certain tasks or master specific techniques. Practitioners are responsible for doing meditation or they may have to learn about different stages in meditation. Ceremonies may have to be performed or different yogic postures or asanas assumed, or they may have to struggle to eject undesirable thoughts from their mind.

In Kundalini Shaktipat it is not necessary to do any of these things. All the person has to do is sit with a complete sense of surrender to the present moment and experience. To achieve Shaktipat a person should be warm and welcoming to all thoughts or emotions as they occur, allowing inner life to flow effortlessly through the body without interference or judgement. Then, according to

the nature and state of the spiritual consciousness of each initiate, different meditative experiences — emotional, intellectual, or creative in nature — will occur by themselves.

GURU AND INITIATE

In the Shaktipat tradition, a Guru is a person who can awaken Kundalini energy in another. The one receiving the energy from the Guru is the initiate. A person in whose presence or by whose touch one feels inner happiness and bliss is a Guru. In fact, one's Atman or Soul is the real and ultimate Guru — there is none above Atman. But this concept is too abstract for many on the spiritual path which is why they take a physical Guru. One may adopt a Guru until the realization of Atman (the inner Guru) takes place. Sometimes one is dissatisfied with the Guru. There is always the freedom to choose another, but this should only be done when following the same Guru doesn't feel right intuitively anymore. A Guru is there to reveal and dissolve the ego, which is never easy. Vigilance as to why there is discomfort working with the Guru is vital, because when the ego feels threatened it will find reasons to leave the Guru to stop any further spiritual advancement. Just as a bee goes from one flower to another in search of honey, a practitioner can also go from Guru to Guru in search of knowledge but one needs to be aware that superficial flitting about will not aid spiritual unfoldment.

In an initiation, if the initiate does not feel inner happiness or bliss — and certainly if one year after initiation (and having rigorously followed instructions and been vigilant with the ego) one does not experience bliss and intuitive knowledge — then it may be time to look for another Guru. Finding a self-declared Guru who is ready to work for money is easy; finding an authentic Guru is difficult.

The aspirant needs to be prepared for the initiation, too. This means the mind and body must be made as strong as possible. If cement is put on mud, its utility is weak like mud; but when applied to brick, it becomes as strong as stone. Similarly, when practitioners prepare themselves through the training of Hatha yoga and achieve renunciation of the world before Shaktipat initiation, they will attain a high state of spiritual development soon after initiation. However, Gurus normally do not insist on prior preparation. In cases where the aspirant is unprepared, after initiation some of the Shakti is used for clarifying and transforming the neo-initiate, strengthening the body and mind. After being initiated, one should build better foundations for spiritual advancement by assuming a spiritual practice of life. Yogic postures provide physical stability, mudras give the body strength, and pranayama or breath-control provides subtlety, cleansing the nerves and prompting focus on the inner world. Determination and meditation provide single-pointed-concentration on consciousness, and samadhi (inner absorption) provides the final absorption of consciousness. The Vedanta points out that knowledge without practical application in the form of spiritual practice is insufficient for Self-Realization.

Building strong spiritual foundations generate in the practitioner two qualities. First, Non-attachment, the state of controlled Chitta (mind-stuff) containing no movement toward anything desired or away from anything not desired. This does not mean that there is a physical disassociation with the world, but more a sense of detachment at the mental level breaking the cycle of desire and attachment. When this happens, the second quality of renunciation follows. Discarding materialistic attachment completely is renunciation. A practitioner develops non-attachment first and then renunciation follows naturally. Non-attachment and renunciation are the result of a meditative and contemplative life and are the pillars for the highest good. They are called Parmarth (for the highest good). These two are very important for the initiate to possess, in order to experience successful and effective Shaktipat.

To understand the above and the suffering that arises when one hasn't these qualities, one has only to look at the average person and how they suffer because of their attachment to worldly affairs. The physical body is everything for them, and the fear of death is often paramount in their thoughts. Little spiritual progress is made when the mind is consumed with the fear of death. Nevertheless, by controlling the Chitta through making it dispassionate in gradual steps, non-attachment can be achieved. Slowly, one understands that this world is transitory, changing constantly, and ultimately decaying. The pursuit and satisfaction of desires cannot lead to inner happiness, since one desire leads to another in an unending chain of dissatisfaction. Combining this understanding with the study of spiritual literature, contemplation and meditation, increases detachment from the objective world. This results in corresponding gains in spiritual advancement. An initiation at this stage can produce wonderful direct experiences with Shakti.

Also important is the relationship between the path of knowledge and the path of yoga. Those on the path of knowledge experience yoga (joining the Soul with Super-soul or Self-Realization) after many lifetimes. A yogi acquires knowledge through the practice of yoga becoming liberated in a single lifetime. Therefore Yoga is a method by which results can be achieved in a single lifetime. Just as a monkey jumps from one branch to another to finally reach the desired tree laden with fruit, so the yogi moves from one chakra to another. He/she gradually crosses the first six chakras until he/she finally arrives at the seventh/crown center, where consciousness and prana are anchored. At this stage the yogi acquires intuitive knowledge and liberation at the same time. An ideal way for spiritual advancement is to pursue the path of knowledge and the path of yoga simultaneously, as they complement each other. This may also be the fastest way to achieve spiritual advancement.

KUNDALINI SHAKTIPAT INITIATION

Awakening through a Guru is called Shaktipat. In this method, "divine energy" passes directly from the Guru to the initiate. The initiation can be performed in four ways: through touch, sight, mental concentration, and a mantra. The easiest way of understanding how these four processes work is through an example. A bird affects the growth of the chick inside an egg by sitting on it or touching it with its body. In the same way, the Guru awakens the power of the disciple by his/her touch. As a fish nourishes its children through its sight, so, the Guru passes the energy to the disciple by his/her sight or look. As a tortoise brings out the children from the eggs under the ground by concentration and determination, so, the Guru awakens the energy in the disciple through mental concentration. A Guru can also awaken the energy by speaking and passing on a mantra to the disciple. A mantra contains the subtle seeds of divinity and is not just a combination of words or letters. Traditionally, the divine power of mantra is realized when it passes from the Guru to the initiate.

It is the duty of the Guru to determine the ability of the practitioners — in terms of their prior preparation with Hatha yoga and the degree of their faith and surrender — before initiation. The desirable effects in the practitioner are brought forth through Shaktipat. Once activated, Shakti will first purify and transform the practitioner, and then the automatic movements will come into manifestation.

Sometimes Kundalini Shaktipat is activated but its manifestation takes time. Activation and manifestation are two different things. To make Kundalini manifest either the Guru has to impart additional Shakti or the practitioner has to engage oneself in spiritual discipline. Inactive Shakti can be caused by a number of reasons.

Nervous disorders or the continuous loss of seminal fluid can cause inactivation. Energy activates quickly in a sound body.

Since the organs and senses become weak with age, activation is faster among younger practitioners.

Because women tend to be more in tune with their emotions, they have a greater chance of activating the energy.

Indifference or annoyance on the part of the Guru towards the disciple can impede the process. High spiritual values and a pure heart trigger activation. Impurities of any kind slow the process down.

Evil deeds or impure thoughts such as theft, murder, or a determination to harm someone in any way will impede the process of activation.

However, the practitioner has no reason to worry if he/she has truly surrendered to the Guru, since the Guru's additional supply of energy will guide the practitioner through. Ultimately the practitioner is responsible for his/her own actions and intentions. Given the initiate's karmic history, a Guru can only act as a catalyst for what is ready to be reborn. No Guru can short circuit karma, and for this reason each person who is intending to awaken Kundalini — either with or without a Guru — must take the responsibility and karmic consequences of such actions.

Sometimes Shakti may manifest more intensely, affecting how a person behaves in public. There may be imbalances in walking, trembling, or perhaps crying at holy places. When this happens, the Guru should be consulted. The Guru has the power to slow or accelerate Shakti manifestation. The practitioner should continue to practice yoga and avoid going to public places since the transmigration of energy into non-initiates can result in automatic movements by the unknowing bystanders. This surprising experience can result in the need for hospitalization of the unprepared.

If the Guru dies there is no need to be afraid that the grace of the Guru will be lost, since the activation of Shakti in the practitioner is permanent and will always be a part of his/her experience. The power comes from God since the Guru, inner Guru, Universal Consciousness, and God are one. If the practitioner dies before the achievement of the final result, the activated Kundalini continues in the next incarnation. The process continues until the achievement of samadhi. The spiritual force then merges into the cause, that is, the Soul. In some cases the successor of the Guru, usually appointed by him/her before his death, continues to help practitioners toward the goal.

Kundalini Shaktipat - LIBERATION

Traditionally, Shakti-Kundalini, when awakened, transforms the seeds of past actions into automatic movements which results in reduced passions. The thought currents of Chitta (mind-stuff) transform themselves from disturbing ones to calm ones, ultimately losing their power. Similarly, the mind is also freed of desires. The vices of lust, anger, passion, attachment, pride, and jealousy are transcended. These vices are veils of ignorance which delude the mind. The awakened Shakti destroys the veil of Maya (illusion). Shakti originates in the Soul, by which Chitta appears to be conscious and is responsible for the creation of the veil of Maya, which when shattered, returns and reunites with the Soul. Thus, the identification of Chitta with Soul is broken, and with the destruction of the Chitta activity, the state of Self-realization is attained. In this way the individual soul attains the state of super-consciousness.

As the automatic movements become progressively subtler, the aspirant experiences greater joy from these movements. For example, one may experience jerking, vibrating, rolling, or rigorous yogic postures in the beginning, with little or no peace and bliss. In later stages vibrations

become rhythmic and soft, with experiences of light and sound and entering into trance. The aspirant is inwardly absorbed in bliss and after the initiate's mind has been purified the movements disappear. The practitioner now experiences oneness with Ultimate Reality.

EXPERIENCES ON AWAKENING

Because yoga is practiced widely and produces results felt by everyone, it is not surprising that the personal experiences of hundreds are being recorded as their Kundalini Shakti awakens and becomes active. Through pranayama or meditation or through Shaktipat the inner power awakens and the indicators described below are observed in the practitioner. However, no two practitioners experience the same thing. The symptoms are not permanent and their intensity is proportional to the karmic balance of the practitioner. They fade away with acquired maturity. A practitioner who has less karmic debt is likely to have milder indicators than one who has more karma to work through. At the end of the process, only the feelings of inner bliss and intuitive knowledge are left. Everything else vanishes.

I witnessed the manifestation of kriyas (automatic movements) at the annual conference of Kundalini Research Network in Philadelphia in 1995 for the first time. The person was a male practitioner from Rishikesh, India. For almost one minute he called out the name of the holy river Ganges and made movements with his hands, while he was seated on the ground. Immediately his movements looked to be taken over by some invisible controller and he began to perform various yoga postures, one after the other. Many of the postures he performed were not ordinarily possible and he demonstrated some pain while performing them. But the genuineness of the performance was felt and appreciated by everyone present. As was said earlier, a practitioner will automatically go into those movements which are necessary for his/her development. One has no control or authority over them. After about half-an-hour the practitioner came back to normal and reported feeling fine. The next demonstration I saw was in India by some practitioners in the presence of their Guru.

Here are some more examples of differing indicators of awakening:

Nan was a college student in the Midwest in the 1960s. She had been a drug addict, but later lived in an ashram in India where she meditated for up to eight hours a day and did not eat much. Nan frequently experienced kriyas such as making sounds, humming, jerking her body, rolling around on the floor, and falling over. She said: "I experienced twisting-snaking energy that was blissful, moving from the lower back or base of the spine upward, that caused my body to writhe around, moaning and groaning, twisting, swaying, falling forward or backward and then having a sudden backward jerk of the head accompanied by the sound of 'hum.' There was also an arching backward until falling over." Sometimes she fell over and rolled on the ground or moved into asanas or mudras, and once she danced in a trance of ecstasy. (Greenwell 1990, p. 189–190)

Karen, a slim and graceful college professor in her 40s, studied Self-Realization Fellowship courses of Yogananda and practiced Kriya Yoga. She began Jungian analysis, and had lucid dreams. One night she began spontaneous rapid breathing and felt like jumping into an abyss. She saw an image of a door opening and some kind of energy passing through her. Another time, vibrations and tremors passed through her legs, spine, and face and she performed yoga asanas (postures) spontaneously for about three hours. Energy streamed upwards and vibrations shook her entire body. She felt that the energy wanted to do things with her body that she was unable to do, and her body felt like clay. She was pulled into extreme postures — she fell backward and upside down, her fingers rigid; she performed a headstand; she stood up with a full body vibration and went forward to the ground; she heard the words "siddha yoga" and her head jerked from side to side; she had a sense of a butterfly body living within her as if her body was its

cocoon. It seemed to break out as a new body through her back with still wet wings beginning to unfold; an unusual breathing pattern took over; she began growling and pawing at the floor and said, "I am a leopard; I'm a South-American leopard." (Greenwell 1990, p. 208–209)

ORDER OF EXPERIENCES

When the awakening of Kundalini is first experienced, the practitioner feels that the body, mind, and prana have become powerless, since all activities are stilled. When Kundalini receives light from Shakti, the practitioner feels the active energy of prana in one's consciousness. Later, one hears an internal Sound but cannot find the origin of the Sound. When Kundalini assumes the form of nada (unstruck continuous sound) then one begins to hear its form very faintly. Next the practitioner begins to see divine lights that gradually take the form of a fine flame, whereupon the nada takes the clear form of sounds from the violin, flute, humming of bees, and other similar sounds. Finally nada takes the form of OM or AUM, which is Brahman Itself, and then whatever one determines comes to pass. The subtle form of OM eradicates sin and the deeper form of OM provides liberation. All other forms of automatic movement cease and only the sound of OM remains. One is sightless, only the state of peacefulness and single-pointed concentration remains. On physical death one attains the Brahma-lok or the plane of the residence of Brahman, the final achievement.

As the consciousness becomes pure one sees the Guru, Brahman, and various demi-gods or saints clearly. One may also have visions of the spiritual identities one is most familiar with, such as Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mother Mary, formless Light, or any other representations of pure and compassionate energy — they are seen by the practitioner either in dreams, visions or in trance states. Their appearance indicates successful spiritual practice. One may witness such things while walking, sitting or in spiritual practice.

One experiences divine flavors, divine smells, and divine touches, too. The enjoyment of worldly pleasures by people without divine knowledge leads them to grief and suffering, while spiritually perfected individuals receive everything to enjoy without longing and attachment and remain ever happy.

MY OWN EXPERIENCES

I have passed through most of the experiences described above. I wrote about them in chronological order and gave complete details in Kundalini for Beginners. I first saw the manifestation of Light in 1984 and the appearance of Sound in 1987, which exists today. I have also experienced Soul-travel to Higher Realms continually since 1987. I can vouch by my own experiences that it is not necessary to cut oneself off from life to achieve them. One can be successful in yoga while living a practical conventional life. These two things are inclusive and they do not interfere with each other. On the contrary, yoga practices generate the energy necessary for success in the world while also enjoying life more fully. By enjoying life's experience in full one achieves liberation and breaks the cycle of death and rebirth, once and for all. By the grace of God, I have received a number of initiations from respected Gurus but I also worked as a professor of mathematics for more than 30 years. After experiencing Kundalini in 1987, I retired in order to devote myself completely to my spiritual path in 1994.

I have seen the manifestation of kriyas in some practitioners in the presence of the Guru. This same Guru initiated me, although I had my Kundalini awakened many years ago. When I asked about the purpose of this initiation (since I already had an awakened Kundalini) the Guru told me that although my Kundalini was awakened it was not active. The Guru passed his power into me by his touch. For the next three days I underwent automatic movements of my body, although the movements were gentle and rhythmic and not as violent and varied as in the case of some

beginners. I also experienced fast and deep inhalations and exhalations accompanying the movements. After 30 to 45 minutes of movements I would go into a trance witnessing inner bliss and oneness with the Reality. For the rest of the day I was filled with an inner happiness and was indifferent to the outer world. Afterwards and for the next two weeks I had an itchy back and burning in my spine. Gradually these symptoms disappeared.

When Kundalini is both awakened and active for some time, and the Shaktipat becomes stabilized in the practitioner, he/she becomes a Guru him/herself and begins to help others raise their Kundalini. I saw that some practitioners who had spent time preparing themselves would go into samadhi when I touched their third eye. An Australian couple came to see me after reading Kundalini for Beginners. The man had been practicing Hatha Yoga and Pranayama for several years. In the morning he came for lessons. I gave him instruction in performing asanas and touched him. He began to perform several yogic postures perfectly and effortlessly, which he could not do earlier. His eyes were closed all the time, and he did not see what he was doing. After about half-an-hour of this performance he became still and normal, and was looking very peaceful and happy. He told me that he had some kriyas in the past but not as intensely as that day.

Although the art of Shaktipat is the easiest and most direct method of awakening Kundalini, its use is uncommon and rare in the present age. The teachings of Shaktipat had been secret, passed from mouth to ear, and were not written. They were almost lost in antiquity. To look for a Master, practitioners searched the Himalayan caves for many years with little success. Nevertheless, for some, there has always been and will continue to be the Guru-initiate Shaktipat.

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