

Yogic Way of Awakening “Kundalini”-The Serpent Power

Satyanarayan Mishra^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Kundalini yoga is a type of yoga which has its original source from Tantra tradition of India. The word ‘kundalini’ is a Sanskrit word which has a meaning “coiled like a snake.” The tantric scriptures say, the Universe is in the form of “shakti” or energy. This is the feminine energy which we call ‘kundalini’ existing both inside and outside our body in the form of a goddess or divine form. This divine energy can be regarded as the inner manifestation of the supreme divine mother inside the human body. It is otherwise known as ‘serpent power’. Which exists in everyone’s body usually in a dormant and inactive state. The muladhara chakra existing at the base of the spine of the metaphysical system of body is the abode of goddess kundalini. Rarely human beings come across and experience about this dormant divine energy and very few of them get inspired to activate this. Though medical science has not yet recognized this hidden energy of our body, literature of Tantra and yoga explain elaborately regarding the existence, ways of awakening, results and hazards in the path of wrong practice of arousal of this dormant divine energy. Ancient hatha yogic texts like Hathayoga pradipika, Gheranda samhita and Siva samhita deal extensively about kundalini practice.

Keywords: *Hatha Yoga, Kosha, Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata Sahasrara, Yoga, Nadi, Ida, Pingala, Sushumna, Tantra, Tantric, Chakra, Kundalini, Serpent Power*

Hathayoga may be treated as a branch of Kundalini Yoga. The major Hatha yogic texts i.e. Hatha Yoga Pradipika explains that the highest purpose of life is to become one with Supreme God, to achieve self-realization, samadhi or moksha, whatever we may call. This text also describes that main technique to attain union with Absolute supreme power is by the way of meditation. Since most of us cannot meditate properly, the hatha yogic texts describe procedures like asanas and pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and meditation techniques to purify the body and learn to control over mind and prana. These practices help in awakening the dormant power of “kundalini” or “serpent” which is the objective of yoga for achievement of liberation or “mokhsya”.

¹ Research Scholar, Yoga, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, India

*Responding Author

DISCOVERY OF KUNDALINI ENERGY

The discovery of Kundalini is not a new incident to man kind. There are many strange happenings which cannot be explained by science. For example, sometimes predictions come true, dreams realize and become reality, an intuitive force sometimes alerts us about in coming dangers, literary activities like the spirit of writing poems or books or other types of creativity flow from some unknown external source etc .There are many people carrying extra sensory perception power and some of them can even perform miracles. These extra ordinary happenings are termed as paranormal. It can otherwise be interpreted as the result of awakening of the dormant energy of goddess kundalini within him/her.

Meaning

In Sanskrit, 'Kundal' means coil. So also Kundalini has been referred as that which is coiled or has a coiled shape. In another interpretation, the word “Kundalini” originates from the word “Kunda “which means a deeper place, pit or cavity. The fire which is used in the initiation ceremony is kindled in a pit which is also known as kunda. Alternatively kunda is also a place where a dead body is burnt. Kunda also refers to the concave cavity in which the brain, resembling a coiled and sleeping serpent nestles. These are the multiple meanings of kundalini which we generally come across during the course of our study about the concept of kunda and kundalini.

The **Three Bodies Doctrine** is an essential doctrine in Indian philosophy and religion, especially Yoga, Advaita, Vedanta and Tantra. It tells the human being is constituted of three bodies or '**sarira traya**' emanating from Brahman by avidya or ignorance.

The three bodies that comprise an individual are as follows:

PHYSICAL BODY, ASTRAL BODY AND CAUSAL BODY

Physical Body

Physical body is the gross body which is called as 'sthula sarira'.

It is our physical body which eats, breathes and moves (acts).The gross body has many diverse components, produced because of one's *karmas* (actions) in past life out of the elements which have undergone panchikarana i.e. combination of the five primordial subtle elements.

Astral Body

It is subtle body or otherwise known as "suksma sarira".

Suksma sarira or the subtle body is the body of the mind and the vital energies.It maintains the life force of gross body which keep the physical body alive and upon death it is the soul which transmigrates or *jiva* which separates from the gross physical body.

Karana Sarira - Causal Body

Karana sarira or the causal body acts merely as the cause or seed of the subtle body and the gross body. It serves no other function than being the seed of the subtle and the gross body. It

Yogic Way of Awakening "Kundalini"-The Serpent Power

is *nirvikalpa rupam*. "Undifferentiated form". It originates with avidya or "ignorance" of the real identity of the atman, instead giving birth to the notion of jiva.

The Indian tradition identifies it with the 'Anandamaya kosha' and the deep sleep state, where *buddhi* becomes dormant and all concepts of time fail, although there are differences between these three descriptions.

The causal body is considered as the most complex of the three bodies. It contains the impressions of experience, which result from past experience.

Four Bodies Concept

Siddharameshwar Maharaj, the guru of Nisargadatta Maharaj, discerns four bodies, by including Turiya or the "Great-Causal Body" as a fourth body. Here resides the knowledge of "I am" that cannot be described, the state before Ignorance and Knowledge or **Turiya** state, which has been described below.

The three bodies are an essential part of the Yoga physiology. The main objective of Yoga is controlling the vital energies of the bodies, thereby attaining *siddhis* (magical powers) and *moksha* (liberation).

Five Koshas (Sheaths)

There are five sheaths or koshas as per Taittiriya Upanishad. The three bodies are often equated with the five koshas (sheaths), which cover the atman or soul.

1. *Sthula sarira*, the Gross body, also called the *Annamaya Kosha*.
2. *Suksma sarira*, the Subtle body, composed of:
 - a. Pranamaya Kosha (Vital breath or Energy)
 - b. Manomaya Kosha (Mind)
 - c. Vijnanamaya Kosha (Intellect)
3. *Karana sarira*, the Causal body, the Anandamaya Kosha (Bliss)

Four States of Consciousness and Turiya State

The Mandukya Upanishad describes four states of consciousness, namely waking consciousness, dream, deep sleep and turiya, the base-consciousness. Waking consciousness, dream, and deep sleep are equated with the three bodies, while turiya is a fourth state, which is equated with atman and purusha.

Turiya State: State of Pure Consciousness

The fourth state is the Turiya state or state of pure consciousness. It is the background which underlies and transcends the three common states of consciousness. In this consciousness state, both absolute and relative, Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman are transcended. It is the true

Yogic Way of Awakening “Kundalini”-The Serpent Power

state of experience of the infinite (*ananta*) and non-different (*advaita/abheda*), free from the dualistic experience which results from the attempts to conceptualize (*vipalka*) reality.

Nadis

Nadis (nerve channels) are found in the astral body and are responsible for flow of prana. They are otherwise referred as astral tubes. There are 72000 nadis in the astral body and generally they correspond with nerves of the physical body. However there exist three main nadis or channels which correspond with the spinal nerves and concern us in the practice of kundalini and hatha yoga.

The three nadis are named as: Ida, Pingala and Sushumna.

1. Ida nadi is associated with the left side of the body. It is associated with the mind, cold, passivity, apana and the moon.
2. Pingala nadi is associated with the right side of the body .It is linked with prana, heat,activity and the sun.
3. Sushumna nadi lies in between Ida and Pingala and it is the main channel which allows passage for flow of kundalini when the nadis have been purified extensively and chakras have undergone much more progress in course of practice.

It is the main goal of hatha yogic practices to purify the nadis and then to cause the prana and apana to meet and rise through the sushumna.

Chakras

Chakras are intersection of two or more nadis. Since there are so many nadis, so there are uncountable nadis in astral body. There are 7 main chakras associated with the awakening of kundalini which are: Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishudha, Ajna and Sahasrara

PROCESS OF AWAKENING KUNDALINI (SERPENT POWER)

There are two main phases of awakening of kundalini. Those are purification and awakening. For purification process there are several yogic techniques such as pranayama, asana and kriyas. For awakening process more advanced pranayamas, mudras and bandhas should be practiced under proper guidance to move the kundalini from its seat in the base of the spine. Then after the awakened energy will progressively move upwards through the sushumna and the chakras until it reaches the sahasrara chakra at the top of the head. This is otherwise called as union of Siva and Shakti.

Hazards of faulty practice and need of guide

Faulty practice may create hazards in physiology as well as psychology of the individual. Persons may have severe breakdown of energy in both body and mind level. People may go insane because of faulty practice. Many yogis because of careless practice have been ruined by

Yogic Way of Awakening “Kundalini”-The Serpent Power

these unchecked powers when they tried to awaken kundalini before they were ready. So the practitioner has to perform the basic groundwork of yama, niyama and purification prior to kundalini awakening.

There are many procedures whose main object is to purify the nadis and open the chakras. However for best results and risk free practice one should have an expert guide who should be a qualified teacher in this faculty.

Kundalini in Hathayogic Texts

Kundalini has been so meaningfully elaborated in classic texts like Hatha yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita or Shiva Samhita contrary to other hatha yogic texts.

Hathayoga Pradipika

The Hathayoga pradipika explains that the main technique to achieve self realization or union of the self with the God is through meditation. Since most people are not able to meditate, other hathayogic tricks like asana, pranayama, mudra etc should be learnt to control the mind and prana.

SUMMARIES OF PRACTICE

Hathayoga Pradipika

1. As the chief of the snakes is the support of the earth with all the mountains and forests on it, so all the Tantras (Yoga practices) rest on the Kundalini. (The Vertebral column.)
2. When the sleeping Kundalini awakens by favor of a guru, then all the lotuses (in the six chakras or centers) and all the knots are pierced through.
3. Susumna (Sunya Padavi) becomes a main road for the passage of Prana, and the mind then becomes free from all connections (with its objects of enjoyments) and Death is then evaded.
4. Susumna, Sunya, Padavi, Brahma Randhra, Maha Patha, Smasana, Sambhavi, and Madhya Marga are names of one and the same thing.

In order, therefore, to awaken this goddess, who is sleeping at the entrance of Brahma Dwara (the great door), mudras should be practiced well.

Like a door opened with the help of a key, the yoga practitioner unlocks the door to liberation with the help of kundalini energy says Hatha yoga pradipika.

(H.P-Chapter 3, Verse 101)

Gheranda Samhita

Gheranda Samhita speaks of seven fold yoga such as Shatkarma, Asana, Mudra, Pratyahara, Pranayama, Dhyana and Samadhi. The text is divided into seven chapters and sometimes said as describing Ghatashta yoga. It may be noted here that Patanjali's yoga sutras describe eight fold

Yogic Way of Awakening “Kundalini”-The Serpent Power

path or astanga yoga .The Samadhi chapter of Gheranda Samhita explains different methods than those described by Maharshi Patanjali. Gheranda Samhita or Gheranda’s collection is one of the three classic texts of hatha yoga. The other two texts are Hatha Yoga Pradipika and Shiva Samhita. Gheranda Samhita is a text of 17 th century and is no less than an encyclopedia on hatha yoga. The text is an authentic manual on yoga where the sage Gheranda teaches the concept and practices of different hathayogic procedures, breathing practices, mudra and meditation to the disciple Chandakapli through mutual conversation. Gheranda Samhita speaks specially of Kundalini practice and meditation on Kundalini contrary to other hatha yogic texts .

Shiva Samhita

Shiva Samhita explains the existence and awakening of kundalini in a nice way.

In this body, which is called Brahmanda (microcosm, literally the mundane egg) there is the nectar-rayed moon, in its proper place, on the top of the spinal cord, with eight kalas (in the shape of a semi-circle).

This has its face downwards, and rains nectar day and night. The ambrosia further sub divides itself into two subtle parts. One of these, through the channel named Ida goes over the body to nourish it, like the waters of the heavenly Ganges-certainly this ambrosia nourishes the whole body through the channel of Ida.

WESTERN CONCEPT AND BELIEF

In the west, Tantra has acquired many connotations and beliefs that it is a sexual practice. Traditionally, there is a tantric sect who utilizes sexual union as well as a few other things such as wine and meat in order to cause kundalini awakening and achieve self realization.

These types of practices are called left-handed tantra .In their purest form they are reserved for a very few highly-qualified aspirants, and the techniques must be taught by a tantric master. Many people in the west are attracted to this type of tantra, but unfortunately are practicing tamasic techniques which have nothing to do with the real quest for self-realization.

CONCLUSION

More and more research are to be conducted to prove the existence and effects of this primordial and potent energy, also scientific analysis and experiments are to be done on ideal conditions to establish the benefits and possibilities of this hidden dormant power. Need of Guru should nevertheless be ignored.

Acknowledgments

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Yogic Way of Awakening “Kundalini”-The Serpent Power

Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Krishna, G ,Kundalini - The evolutionary energy in man, Shambala. Berkeley, 1971.
- Pandit Shambhu Nath, Speaking of Yoga-A Practical Guide to Better Living, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1988
- Ramacharaka Yogi, Hatha Yoga, D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., (P) Ltd., Asian Reprint, Bombay, 1977
- Shri Yogendra, Guide to Yoga Meditation, Yogendra Publication Fund, Bombay, 1983.
- Shri Yogendra, Hatha Yoga Simplified, The Yoga Institute, Bombay, 1975
- Sri Ananda, The Complete book of yoga: Harmony of Body and mind, Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1980
- Swami Muktibodhananda and Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Hatha Yoga Pradipika. (Commentary), Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, India, 1905.
- Swami Digambaraji and Pt. Raghunath Shastri Kokaje, Hathapradipika of Svatmarama, (Edited) Kaivalyadhama, S.M.Y.M. Samiti, Lonavla, Maharashtra, 1970
- The Yoga Sadhakas, Pranayama Made Easy, The Yoga Institute, Yogendra Publications., Bombay, 1981
- Vasu, Srisa Chandra. The Siva Samhita, (Translated) The Panini Office, Bhuvanewari Ashram Bahadurganj, Allahabad, 1914