

Yoga: Kundalini Yoga

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

No discussion of yoga is complete without an evaluation of “kundalini yoga.” By name, this is now practiced by tens of thousands of Americans, including many professing Christians in mainline churches. However, since we have discussed kundalini yoga at length elsewhere, we will give only a brief definition here.

In Hindu mythology and occult anatomy, the goddess Kundalini is thought of as a female serpent lying dormant at the base of the spine. Arthur Avalon comments that “kundalini is the Divine Cosmic Energy in bodies.”¹ She represents the female half of the divine polarity in man. While lying at the base of the spine, she is separated from Shiva, her divine “lover” and masculine counterpart, who resides in the brain. When aroused by yoga practices, she uncoils, travels up the spine toward her lover, opening the alleged psychic centers called *chakras* in the process. When the crown or top *chakra* is reached, the union of Shiva/Shakti occurs, supposedly leading the practitioner to divine enlightenment and union with Brahman. “Traditionally she is known as Durga the creatrix, Chandi the fierce and bloodthirsty, and Kali the destroyer. She is also Bhajangi the serpent. As Chandi or Kali she has a garland of skulls around her neck and drinks human blood.”²

Kundalini arousal is not, as commonly thought, restricted to *hatha* yoga practice. Even yoga authorities have said that all yoga is ultimately kundalini yoga and that yoga is meaningless without it. This is why no less an authority than Hans Rieker concludes, “Kundalini [is] the mainstay of *all* yoga practices.”³

Kundalini arousal or its equivalent is found not only in yoga; it is also encountered in scores of the new religions, many occult practices, and in some practices of New Age medicine. Indeed, we have found no less than 15 different New Age health techniques in which proponents claim that their methods may arouse kundalini. (Please see our extended discussion in *Kundalini Yoga*, New Age archives, May, 2001)

ENERGY PHENOMENA AND SPIRIT POSSESSION

Perhaps the dominant characteristic in kundalini arousal and other yoga practice is an experience of energy infusion, or possession.⁴ Gopi Krishna describes the following experiences of most yogic, meditative, and mystical practices. “During the ecstasy or trance, consciousness is transformed and the yogi, sufi, or mystic finds himself in direct rapport with an overwhelming Presence. This warm, living, conscious Presence spreads everywhere and occupies the whole mind and thought of the devotee....”⁵ Furthermore, this energy “is *invariably* experienced by all mediators and yogis as some kind of *supernatural* or divine energy.”⁶ Not surprisingly, we have yet to read a kundalini or yoga theorist who defines this energy infusion, or possession, as actual demon possession; however, there is often recognition of a possessing god or entity, and sometimes references to the demonic. The Taoist Master Chao Pi Ch'en observed that “as time passes, demonic states will occur to the practiser [sic]....”⁷ Significantly, yogic energy manifestations and possession are sometimes initially sensed by the experienter as the work of an evil spirit. But this primary impression is “corrected” in accordance with Hindu theory, classifying the phenomena as a “divine process.”⁸

But when we examine specific characteristics of kundalini arousal and its energy manifestations, we discover it is far more easily interpreted as a result of demonism than of anything divine. A perusal of the standard literature reveals the following characteristics: Kundalini energy is admittedly an occult energy; it is personal and supernatural; it can function independently of the person; it permeates and infuses the individual; it can *force* spontaneous yogic and other actions, including worship; it produces a form of consciousness and personality alteration hostile to Christian faith; it is related to evil pagan gods and deities; it is described as “being possessed” by those who experience it; it is dangerous and destructive not only to human life but to conventional societal values and morality.

In sum, kundalini arousal displays 1) an independent supernatural nature, 2) personal volition, 3) destructive potential, 4) an amoral or evil nature, and 5) a desire for “lordship,” that is, the exerting of personal control over the practitioner, forcing compliance.⁹

These facts do not suggest that we are dealing with an *impersonal* energy. The facts suggest that we are dealing with personal demonic spirit entities whose goal is spiritual deception and personal ownership. Sooner or later, the person who experiences kundalini arousal, experiences spirit possession. A leading guru, Swami Muktananda, reveals that he was violently shaken by a spirit as part of the divine “work” of kundalini within him. “A great deity in the form of my guru has spread all through me as *chiti* [energy] and was shaking me,” and “when I sat for meditation, my whole body shook violently, just as if I were possessed by a god or a bad spirit.”¹⁰

Yogi Amrit Desai warns that unless the experience is interpreted “properly” for the student, “he will become frightened, thinking it to be mental illness”—or “evil spirits.”¹¹ But it gets worse. There is also the phenomenon of mass possession which can occur among disciples gathered to hear the guru. This may end with the disciple finding himself in an involuntarily assumed position of worship of the guru, and, characteristically, worshipping the spirit entity possessing the guru:

... As Amrit led us deeper into meditation, I began to realize that something unusual was happening to me....

Suddenly surges of energy-like electrical charges streaked up my spine.... Suddenly a scream from someone in the back of the room, then another. In a few moments the place was a mad house. People were crying hysterically, laughing uncontrollably, gasping for breath, even rolling on the floor. Apparently every one was experiencing some manifestation of the same energy I was feeling.

Suddenly the whole thing stopped.... Amrit began to explain what had happened. We had just undergone what is called a *shaktipat* [power transfer] initiation.... [A]ll forms of yoga and consciousness development are aimed at eventually awakening the kundalini force.... [T]he psychic energy is transferred directly from guru to disciple.

Simply by being in Yogi Desai’s presence we had all experienced to some degree the awakening of the *Shakti* [power]. How this comes about is somewhat mysterious. Yogi Desai explains that the astral body of the guru merges with that of the disciple.... My body filled with a brilliant white light and I allowed myself to be absorbed in it....

When I opened my eyes again I noticed that my body had bent forward; my forehead was touching the floor. I do not remember assuming that position. I was actually bowing down to Yogi Desai! I had never bowed to anyone in my life but some inner unknown force had prompted me.... [H]e was surrounded by persons who only two hours before had never seen him but now sat on the floor around him, holding his feet even kissing his feet....¹²

Consider the following descriptions while under the influence of kundalini and other forms of yoga:

I really felt frightened, as the Power seemed something which could consume me. ¹³

Your mind gets influenced spiritually as if some spirit has taken possession of your body and under that influence different postures of yoga are involuntarily performed without the pain or fatigue. ¹⁴

It seemed that I was being controlled by some power which made me do all these things. I no longer had a will of my own. ¹⁵

In conclusion, kundalini arousal, like shamanism, typically involves some form of spirit possession or temporary or permanent insanity.

Because all yoga has the ability to arouse “kundalini,” all yoga should be avoided. To offer it to the public as a form of *health* practice is highly irresponsible, if not perverse. To offer it to our children in our public schools is a betrayal of their trust.

Notes:

1. Arthur Avalon [Sir John Woodroffe], *The Serpent Power: The Secrets of Tantric and Shaktic Yoga*, New York: Dover, 1974, p. 1.
2. Gopi Krishna, *The Awakening of Kundalini*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975, p. 13.
3. Hans Ulrich Rieker, *The Yoga of Light: Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, New York: Seabury Press, 1971, p. 101, emphasis added.
4. Tal Brooke, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit: Rajneesh, Sai Baba, Muktananda... Gods of the New Age*, Batavia IL: Lion, 1986, p. 610.
5. Gopi Krishna, “The True Aim of Yoga,” *Psychic*, January-February, 1972, p. 14.
6. Haridas Chadhuri, “The Psychophysiology of Kundalini,” in John White, ed., *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment*, Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1979, p. 62, emphasis added.
7. Gopi Krishna, “The True Aim of Yoga,” p. 18.
8. Da Free John, *Garbage and the Goddess*, Lower Lake, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1974; cf. Tal Brooke, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit*.
9. See John White, *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment*; Anne Yeomans, “Psychosynthesis,” *New Realities*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1977; Swami Narayananda, *The Primal Power in Man or the Kundalini Shakti*, Rishikesh, India: Narayananda Universal Yoga Trust, 1970; and Lee Sannella, *Kundalini: Psychosis or Transcendence?*, San Francisco, CA: H. S. Dakin Co., 1977; Swami Sivananda Radha, *Kundalini Yoga for the West*, Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1978.
10. Swami Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978, pp. 84,122.
11. Yogi Amrit Desai, “Kundalini Yoga Through Shaktipat,” in John White, ed., *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment*, pp. 70-71.
12. D. R. Butler, “Instant Cosmic Consciousness,” in John White, ed., *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment*, pp. 185-87.
13. Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power*, p. 21.
14. John White, ed., *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment*, p. 95.
15. Swami Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, p. 76.