

THE TRUTH ABOUT KUNDALINI

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*“And whosoever will, let him
take the water of life freely.”*
Revelation of John 22, 17

The traditions of India and its neighbouring countries offer more spiritual knowledge than any other region of the world. At home and at school we hardly learn anything about the historical and spiritual background of these areas. As a result, we incur the danger of giving a wrong interpretation to this region's spiritual tradition by extracting a part of the whole, if we are interested in Eastern wisdom.

On the subcontinent of India we see a variety of spiritual traditions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Lamaism and other teachings confuse the Western seeker with thousands of gods, deities and different perceptions about life after death and destiny. But even in the large variety of tinges and facets of Hinduism and its pantheon of deities there is the idea of a final unity. This one is the Brahma, or Sadashiva. Through his power Mahamaya (the Great Illusion) he creates all divine, human and material aspects of the universe. At the end, he reabsorbs everything. Yoga, the real meaning of which is “Union with God”, embraces all the efforts of mankind in the spiritual domain. The final aim is not some blurred “enlightenment”, also not to jump in the air a little bit or wear clothes of a certain colour, the aim is the connection with an higher awareness. Yoga, “connection”, is only good when this perception of a higher awareness can be achieved. This Yoga is not one single technique or a determined exercise, it is a way of life once the connection was established. All the asanas, breathing techniques et cetera are helpful tools for those who are connected and know how to apply these techniques, because the same asana may be helpful to one, but harmful to the other – depending on individual constitution. Doing physical exercise without being connected may calm you down a little bit, however, basically it is as if you try to swim without water.

As we have received so much from the East and still are to receive much more, we would like to look closer at the basis of Indian Knowledge. This basis is the classical scriptures of old, for example the Vedas or Upanishads, as well as the teachings of venerated Indian saints and masters such as Markendeya or Tukaram. Simultaneously, we shall try to integrate important scriptures of other cultures - also of the west.

Looking at most of the modern publications¹ on Kundalini, it seems obvious that nothing is known of the roots of religious knowledge. According to the quoted ancient sources, Kundalini is the most subtle, the holiest and mightiest force of the universe, which, only under certain circumstances, is accessible to mortals. These superlatives are meant literally. Even the “Rishis”, the saints/sages, who communicated with the Gods themselves were not allowed to awaken the Kundalini in human beings. Bearing this in mind, one should consider carefully advertisements for “Kundalini-Seminars” or similar offers. Kundalini is not a discovery of our times, she has been described thousands of years before Jesus Christ; and the knowledge we have got has come through old Indian scriptures.

¹ E.g. Gopi Krishna, Kundalini, Lustig-Verlag, 1983; Arthur Avalon, Die Schlangenkraft (The Serpent-Power), Bern 1982; Shivananda, Kundalini Yoga, Munich-Planegg, 1953; just to mention the first ones, hundreds followed, without any basis in the ancient scriptures, and without genuine experience.

Let us try to understand this tremendous power as far as we can with our minds. Numerous names of her are at the same time names of the Goddess Parvati as a virgin (“Uma”, “Gauri”). The name Parvati has only been given at her marriage with Shiva. In her aspect as a mother the spouse of Shiva becomes the “Devi”, the Mother Goddess of the created universe. As Devi she incarnates in times of great difficulty, when all the negative forces rise up and challenge the righteous and religious. She destroys all the demons ruthlessly and without pity, because, as mother, she protects her children - the seekers of truth. This power has also been attributed to the Kundalini, when she acts in a cleansing way in human beings and removes the “individual demons” within. And there exists a link between the primordial power *Adi Shakti*² and Kundalini.

In the few sources³ that refer to *Shri Adi Shakti*, it is usually said that she is the primordial and highest power. She is the one who created the first manifestation; the bridge between the formless non-manifested God and the whole formed creation. Kundalini also builds a connection with the divine, connecting the individual to a collective, higher awareness. – *Shri Adi Shakti* is described as so powerful that Shiva, Vishnu and Brahmadeva were extremely impressed, when they were once granted the permission to visit her sphere (*Devi Bhagawatam*, III book, cp. FN 3). Only after some time did they realize that they were in their mother’s house. Apart from the tremendous power that lies in the Kundalini as part of the primordial force, the protective, motherly aspect clearly appears.

Before considering any detailed parts of ancient scriptures - in particular the “*Jnaneshwari*” - we shall discuss the function of the Kundalini. At this point we must introduce the greatest authority in this matter; *Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*, the Avatara of our times, proven by the awakening of the Kundalini in hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. She can indeed transmit a practical experience of the Kundalini-Power, as well as the corresponding knowledge. Thousands and thousands of people in India, thousands throughout the west, and also in Russia, who have been so fortunate to meet Her, can confirm this. All other Saints, who might have power over Kundalini, lead a withdrawn and hidden life in the Himalayas and its foothills, and they cannot give Kundalini-awakening en masse.

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi explains that the Kundalini resides in every living being as the divine desire to become one with God. Since the beginning of the creation this force has been acting and pushing the evolution forward. In our western tradition Kundalini could be understood as the Holy Spirit. In Hebraic scriptures she is called “*Ruach*”.

If a human being is perfectly pure in his inner, subtle system (which practically means that he has become a saint) he receives his total liberation, “*Moksha*”, at the moment of the Kundalini awakening. This perfect liberation took place for Buddha after he had renounced all his attachments and temptations. If Kundalini awakening takes place in “non-perfect” human beings, she starts cleansing different energy centers, the “*Chakras*”. The effect of the desire to become one with the cause of all creation manifests in the healing of the chakras and is a first step on our way to the final goal. The significance of the Kundalini being the reflection of the divine primordial desire is, that it corresponds with the classical representation of *Adi Shakti*, who at the very moment of creation has given shape first to the desire (*Iccha-Shakti*) and then to the act (*Saraswati*).

² The above-mentioned “*Mahamaya*”, “*The Great Illusion*”, is just one aspect of the *Adi Shakti*

³ E.g. *Devi Bhagawatam*, as “*The Srimad Devi Bhagawatam*”, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1977, cp. Especially book III, ch.

3, 4 and 5.

The last, complete liberation is the union of the soul, the Atma (Shri Shiva) with the Kundalini (Shakti) in order to make the Atma aware or conscious in us. That means, the truth, the all-pervading awareness and the pure joy become reality in us. The Sahasrara chakra above the fontanel bone at the top of the skull opens up and replaces the biggest part of our ego and our conditionings. This process has often been described poetically in old scriptures:

“I had been impressed and dragged far away,
with a burden on my head; now I have
escaped from the burden, for you have accepted me.
How many times I cried to you in time past!
Tuka says, Today my service has borne fruit.”

1983.

Tukaram, “The Poems of Tukaram”, Chap. XII, 593, Delhi,

“Thou art diverting Thyself, in secrecy with
Thy Lord, in the thousand-petalled lotus,
having pierced through the Earth situated in
the Muladhara, the Water in the Manipura, the
Fire abiding in the Swadhisthana, the Air in
the Heart (Anahata), the Ether above (the
Vishuddhi), and Manas between the eyebrows
(Ajna) and thus broken through the entire
Kula path (central channel - Sushumna).”

Shankaracharya, “Saundarya-Lahari”
(The Ocean of Beauty), 9th poem, Adya, 1977.

Where have these modern descriptions of so-called Kundalini-experience come from, which are contradictory and which often report very unpleasant experiences? Most probably these descriptions are partly due to wrong translations of the Jnaneshwari and partly to misunderstandings. Misunderstandings in the sense of mental concepts instead of a practical experience.

For a long time the teachings about Kundalini have been kept as a secret knowledge that has only been bestowed simultaneously with self-realisation, the awakening of the Kundalini. This was the real heritage of the masters, the saints or gurus, who did not perform a hollow, symbolic act, but a living process.

In the Bagavadgita the subject of Kundalini has been very briefly referred to. The Upanishads have only treated parts of it. Markandeya was the first one to break with the taboo (thousands of years ago), and talked openly about it. What these classical scriptures have in common is that they are difficult to understand and that the effects of Kundalini have not been described in detail.

This changed in the 13th century A.D. Around 1275 in the central part of India, Maharashtra, Jnanadeva (also called Jnaneshwar or Dyaneshwar) was born. Although he left this world at a very young age, he is one of India’s greatest saints. As the Bagavadgita had been written in Sanskrit the masses did not have direct access to this most popular religious scripture of the Hindus. Thus Jnanadeva was convinced by his brother to write a commentary on the Bagavadgita in Marathi (the

common language of the people in Maharashtra). This work, the “Jnaneshwari”, contains many more details than the Bagavadgita. It is said that the “Jnaneshwari” can be read like a comment of God himself, who acts in the Bagavadgita. - Marathi has been and is still spoken in Maharashtra. Apart from the changes of a living language through 700 years, Marathi is ideal for beautiful poetry and religious works, but also can be misunderstood if taken literally, as every single word has various meanings, often a material as well as a subtle or a poetic one. The use of images is an important method of poetic expression. This country of Maharashtra and its language have a special significance in the spiritual development of India. Shri Sita and Shri Rama (Ramayana: the incarnation of the God Vishnu and his spouse Laxmi) trod on this soil, Ekanath, Tukaram and many other important rishis and saints have left behind their works in the Marathi language.

In the 6th chapter of the Jnaneshwari the Kundalini and its effects are described. This text again is not easy to understand. The learned and scholars have tried to avoid this very difficult chapter for 700 years, as all written knowledge of the world cannot replace the holy experience. Thus the academics never understood it; and there is one essential point for us: The translations, mainly in English, available in the West, are not correct. They certainly all relate to one original translation, as the mistakes are apparently similar. These errors of translation are probably responsible for the incomprehensible descriptions of Kundalini that we have in the west. For example one of the main mistakes is to suppose that the seat of the Kundalini is in the region of the stomach. This mistake is to be found in the book of Avalon (see FN 1). In the original scriptures nothing of the kind is mentioned. Shankaracharya (8th century AD) says in the Saundarya Lahari (see above) in the 10th verse: “..Thyself assuming the form of a serpent of three-and-a-half coil, sleepest Thou in the hollow of the Kulakunda⁴”. The description refers to the triangular bone, to which we will come back later. Finally, the Devi Bhagawatam should be quoted, book XII, chapter 5, where the Mother of the Worlds (Shri Adi Shakti) is again described as the “Kundalini in the Mooladhar”.

Besides these wrong translations, there is a lack of understanding which we mentioned before: In the Jnaneshwari, at the end of the 10th sub-chapter of chapter 6, Shri Krishna explains clearly the way of a real yogi and says explicitly, that it is the EXPERIENCE of self-realisation, and there is no doubt about the fact that this experience has to come from God⁵. As Arjuna is urging for this knowledge, Krishna says: (11th sub-chapter, first sentence): “I explain it to you in more detail now, but only through the experience it will bear fruit”. So it is clear that a purely mental understanding of the description of the Kundalini is meaningless if the actual happening of self-realisation is lacking. The mediocre translations of the Jnaneshwari unfortunately confirm these words.

This introduction is followed by the description of the “asana” (sitting position), which is favourable to the awakening of the Kundalini. The awakening itself can only be performed by a person who is authorized. The asana is described several times as “the steady seat”, which

⁴ The three-and-half coils of Kundalini relate to the three “moods” (basic principles) of the creation and - the half coil - to the primordial power, neither manifest nor non-manifest. These moods are Mahakali, Mahasaraswati and Mahalaxmi: Desire, also destruction of evil; action, creation; and finally the power of the central channel, of evolution. As said before, Kundalini is a motherly energy and it is not incidentally, that the deepest might of the universe are female in all the world’s cultures (“The Mothers” in Goethe’s “Faust”). We meet those basic principles in antique Rome as “Parcae” (The Fates), in classical Greece as “Moirs”: Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos. At the foot of the Germanic world-ashtree Yggdrasil the “Nornes” Urd, Werdandi and Skuld are resting - spinning, measuring and cutting the “thread of life”.

⁵ Cp. Vedas, Samaveda, book III, ch. 2, decade V, 10, “.God, the Bestower of Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha.” Moksha means complete liberation, enlightenment.

corresponds to the lowest chakra (Mooladhara chakra). It lies at the root of our body and guards the sleeping Kundalini in the sacrum (Mooladhar). Any weakness of this chakra, which is the throne of innocence and wisdom, causes permanent difficulties, as it is the support of the Kundalini. Certain sitting positions should just enable our attention to detach from physical processes. Later in the 13th sub-chapter it is mentioned that the palms of the hands should be kept upwards, in order to feel the Kundalini-energy.

There is a considerable difference between the Mooladhara-chakra and the Mooladhar which lies above it (sacrum), the triangular bone at the end of the spine. At the awakening of the Kundalini, her pulsations can often be seen with the naked eye at the sacrum. This perception is the best proof of its real position; all other conclusions do not correspond with the reality. Lying at the basis of the spine, she rises through the middle channel (Sushumna), which corresponds with the *canalis centralis* in the grey matter of the backbone. The medical term is "*Os Sacrum*", "holy bone", taken over directly from the Greek by the Romans: Its special position was known also in the West, in ancient times. We know that the Egyptians attributed this "*Os Sacrum*" to the God Osiris. In an article of the "Journal of the American Medical Association" (JAMA) of 1987 it is written: "...the idea that the sacrum is the last bone in the body to disintegrate after death and, therefore, necessary for resurrection could qualify it as sacred. The first Biblical intimation that a single bone might be the bone needed for resurrection is in Psalms 34, 21: 'He watches over all the bones; one of them shall not be broken.'" ⁶ - The idea of resurrection or second birth mentioned here is, in various forms, present in all religions.

To all those, who really can feel the effects of the awakened Kundalini, the 14th sub-chapter of Jnanadeva's work proves to be an absolute disaster in translation - knowledge without experience is useless. We have chosen a few important aspects to illustrate this.

The translation of the Marathi word "Tap" as "heat" caused by the awakening of Kundalini is wrong in this context. Here "Tap" means "force". The force, resulting from the exercise of asanas and giving the possibility of the awakening, but not the awakening itself. The activating of the Kundalini is a process beyond human willpower and beyond the force of human action. Thus in the translations, by a misunderstanding of nuances, the mother Kundalini becomes a monster, that devours the intestines voraciously - Whereas in a subtle, beautiful language the power is praised who is eager to give the second birth, to permeate the whole body and to renew it.⁷

The body and its organs, each cell is being touched and purified by Kundalini. This process has been described in detail right up to the roots of the hair by Jnanadeva. Certainly there is no one, who ever before was able to observe and understand the Kundalini in his body and subtle system as precisely as this great Saint. The effect of the different breathing forces in connection with Kundalini is explained as well as the effects on the elements.

The Janeshwari continues with the procedure after the purification of the subtle centres: The Kundalini stays in the centre-channel (Sushumna) of three subtle channels and pours out "of her mouth water, that becomes nectar". This nectar in its turn brings forth a "vital wind, ...that gives a

⁶ JAMA, 1987, Vol. 257, 2061 a. fw. P., Oscar Sugar, PhD, MD. University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago.

⁷ See the Gospel of John, 3.3 f. Jesus talks to Nikodemus about this second birth and Nikodemus asks, if he would have to return into his mother's womb. Jesus tells him that he must be born again of the spirit, "of water and of the Spirit". - The importance of being "born again" is also stressed by the genuine saints of today's India, e.g. Ramana Maharshi.

cooling sensation in and on the body”⁸. The perception of the cool breeze is the best on the palms of the hands and at the top of our head (Sahasrara Chakra). This coolness is also described in the Koran - Sura 36, 65: “One day we will seal their mouths, but their hands will speak...”. This Sura, called “the Heart of the Koran” has the title “JS”. These are the initials of “Joga Sahadsch” as it would be spelled in Arabic. “Sahaj” means “born with” or “spontaneous”, Sahaja Yoga is the yoga of the spontaneous unity with God. The hands “speak” in such a way that each finger, root of the hand and palm correspond with a chakra and the various sensations of the part of the hand inform about the condition of the chakras. There are further hints to the perception of Kundalini in the Koran, as in Sura 24, 24 or 41, 21 and following.

This cooling energy does not only exist after the awakening of the Kundalini, it is one with the divine force, who awakens Kundalini in the individual human being and permeates the whole cosmos. In the Gospel of John, 4, Jesus describes the process of awakening to a Samaritan woman next to a well: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you water of life. The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: Where can you get that water of life? .. Jesus answered, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again: but whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life.” As Janeshwar uses the image of the “water” or “wind of life”, we can find the Kundalini and its effects described by Jesus Christ in the same way. - The completion of the Kundalini’s task is depicted by Jnanadeva in most beautiful Marathi poetry. The skin is only an envelope, in which the radiant being of the 17th phase of the moon is covered. The full moon, the 16th phase, has the meaning of fulfillment, completion. Only Sadashiva, God beyond all perception, is beyond that, in the illuminated Sahasrara.

Through the ancient Scriptures⁹ a structure of the inner system takes shape, which is still very common in India. At the bottom we find the four-petalled lotus of the Mooladhara Chakra. In it resides the guardian of Kundalini, who represents wisdom and innocence. The Kundalini is situated above this center in the sacrum bone and therefore, at her awakening, cannot pass through the chakra placed underneath. If one tries to raise the Kundalini without authorization, then the guardian of the Kundalini sends waves of heat through the body in his temper. Sometimes these waves of heat are misunderstood as the awakening of the Kundalini, but it is just the opposite¹⁰. Jnanadeva says very clearly, that coolness is the sign of the rising Kundalini. Each unauthorized practice to get in touch with Kundalini leads to a damage that makes an awakening more difficult. Only if the process is triggered by an authorized person, does it lead to its fulfillment. The Kundalini, an intelligent and motherly energy, can never do any harm. Even when she heals physical diseases, it is always in a gentle manner.

⁸ Also in the western literature references to this unique perception can be found:

“Mild creative breeze,
A vital breeze which travelled gently on
O’er things which it had made”

Wordsworth, Prelude I, 43-45

“Still the Breath Divine does move,
And the Breath Divine is love.”

W. Blake, The Everlasting Gospel, 41-42

⁹ Essentially the quoted: Bagavadgita, Upanishads, Devi Bhagawatam, Scriptures of: Shankaracharya, Markandeya, Tukaram and of course Jnanadeva.

¹⁰ Inner tensions, unusual forms of perception and specially waves of heat through the body are mentioned by Gopi Krishna (cp. FN1) falsely as effects of Kundalini; however these sensations are warnings, not to misuse this holy power.

In relation to the above mentioned Mooladhara Chakra we must stress that there is no connection at all between sexual activities and the Kundalini or her awakening. Unnatural and exaggerated attention on sexuality weakens and damages this lower chakra. Then the Kundalini has a weak basis and cannot rise for long. In the same way other unnatural behaviour may disturb other Chakras or energy-centers, the same is true for bad intentions or desires even. Thus greed or hatred for example block the ascend of the Kundalini at different levels.

As described in the poetry of Shankaracharya and as known in India in general, the ascending Kundalini passes through the Nabhi-, Swadisthana-, Anahata-, Visshuddhi-, and Agnya-Chakra. As soon as the Agnya Chakra at the forehead gets pierced through, “Nirvichara Samadhi”, thoughtlessness, is achieved. Only at that very moment one can talk about an experience which allows a deeper understanding of the “Jnaneshwari” for instance. Nirvichara Samadhi is spontaneous, like every movement of the Kundalini. Samadhi cannot be achieved through human willpower, that is why the concept, that through efforts of concentration real spiritual progress could be achieved, is wrong.

After the Sushumna, which is the central channel, the subtle channels on the left and the right are enlightened. The left (Ida-Nadi) represents the emotions, conditionings and the past, the right (Pingala-Nadi) activity, planning and the future.

The whole process physically relates with the parasympathetic system and therefore cannot be controlled consciously. The real awakening of Kundalini does not cause any spectacular process or sensation out of control. “Only” a kind of profound peace and joy can be felt, and coolness on top of the head and on the palms of the hands. If the subtle centres, the chakras, are damaged, the perception of Kundalini is reduced in accordance.

Only the one who is able to awaken the Kundalini, so that the effects, as described by Jnanadeva and other masters, can be felt, so that the water of life is flowing, can be called a real Guru in the best tradition of the Great Indian Teachers.