

Rousing the Kundalini

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According to my experience, some of those who practice Yoga will sooner or later get fascinated with some concepts that, strangely enough, have become almost household words in certain circles. They will start talking about *Shiva* and *Shakti*, *Tantra*, *Mantra*, *Chakras* and above all about *Kundalini*. If their teacher is honest and tells them that not having roused his/her own Kundalini, he/she cannot possibly teach it to others, they will feel disappointed. Their teacher has failed to learn a technique that everyone is talking about. If he/she tells them moreover that rousing the Kundalini is not a matter of isolated techniques but the outcome of many things in combination – of physical techniques, such as Asanas, Pranayamas and Bandhas, visualizations, physical, nervous and mental purifications, decreasing attachment to the material side of life, constant concentration on one strain of thought only and many other factors, their reaction might be that after all there must be some simpler technique. One has only to search for that one teacher who will teach it! And in fact, if they are fortunate they might come across a knowledgeable teacher. But contrary to their expectations, this teacher will warn them strongly against dabbling with energies they will not be able to control. Chances are that the teacher will not be believed. Why, energies are something wonderful! All want to have more energy than they have (even if they do not know to what worthwhile and noble use they will put these additional energies). As to the warning that roused energies will have to be controlled, the helpful cautionary advice is often thrown to the wind.

Yet, one glance at a tornado or the tide of the sea would be enough to show anyone that the control of certain energies is simply impossible. For someone disinclined to learn from nature– because that seems much too simple– one glance at a serious traffic accident would also be enough to show what great harm uncontrolled energy can do. Because it is both energy that activates a life-saving artificial kidney and a life-destroying electric chair! Energy sustains human life and is capable of making a cancer grow to end a person's life. It must always be borne in mind that energy can be both constructive and destructive. So, merely wanting to rouse one's Kundalini in order to tap that vast reservoir of energy that is said to exist in a latent form in each human body would be a most short-sighted wish.

But the notion of rousing one's Kundalini and making it move upwards through the main chakras is a multi-faceted one. Kundalini is not only connected with getting tremendous energy, but also with the blossoming of new capacities and powers and an irresistible charisma as well as of achieving great success. Who would not want all this? The greatest materialist would be happy about growing capabilities in all fields. Each politician would want to have charisma, and each competitive-minded person would want to be the greatest success and outdo all others. Wanting to rouse one's Kundalini for reasons such as these would be a self-defeating endeavour. All efforts would be wasted– and merely wasteful activity would be the least that could happen. Raising one's kundalini would be a waste, in such a case, because a materialistic motivation can never lead to progress on a spiritual path. (Just as a genuine spiritual motivation usually does not lead to progress on the material path, atleast not in the short run and perhaps never before the aspirant has lost interest in materialism, so

that that kind of success is no longer a temptation for him/her to be drawn into worldly ambitions again.)

One of the strongest associations of Kundalini pertains to sexual gratification. Descriptions of the process abound with sexual symbolism. The seat of the coiled-up serpent in the *Muladhara Chakra* is said to be below the genital area. From there the serpent— in itself a strong sexual symbol, too— has to wake up and rise. The serpent has to pass through the other main chakras— *Svadisthana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata* and *Visuddha*— and on through *Ajna* in the forehead to finally reach the *Sahasrara* in the crown of the head. There, it is said, the serpent as *Shakti* will unite with *Shiva*. It may, therefore, be safely assumed that aroused Kundalini is, if only subconsciously, associated with sexual bliss in which one will abide from then on forever. It is said in *Tantra* that "by which man falls by that he can also rise". But it is likewise true that endeavours in Yoga are to free oneself from sexual cravings instead of being after ways to indulge in them even better and longer.

So the attempt to rouse the Kundalini for materialistic, worldly gains such as growing capacities and influence on others or for sexual refinement would not just be a waste of efforts. Things may happen that are incomparably worse than just waste. The practitioners may permanently damage their nervous system and become mentally unbalanced. Psycho-physical forces that were formerly dormant in untrained practitioners might suddenly become active and be quite unsettling psychologically. With all former orientation lost, at the mercy of irresistible ever-changing impulses springing up incessantly in them, they will become like that rudderless boat tossed about by each wind that the *Bhagavad Gita* speaks about. And how many boats have not crashed against rocks or been overturned by storms!

But then, if the Kundalini should not be attempted to be roused at all, what are all the writings about Kundalini and all the techniques to rouse her good for? There are numerous books on the modern esoteric book market that cater to a readers who seek ever new sensations. There are also old, authentic, and very learned writings on the Kundalini. Firstly, it should be noted that these latter writings stress that a Guru is indispensable for this process. And a Guru in the traditional sense of this word can, of course, only be someone who is self-realized. This means that a Guru in the traditional, authentic sense of the term would be as hard to find as a needle in a haystack. Secondly, it is stated that an "aspirant must be intelligent, *daksha*; with senses controlled, *jitendriya*; abstaining from injury to all beings, *sarvahimsavinirkukt*; ever doing good to all, *sarvapranihite ratah*; pure, *shuchi*; a believer in Veda, *astika*; whose faith and refuge is in Brahman; and who is a non-dualist, *dvaitahina*. 'Such a one is competent in this Scripture, otherwise he is no Sadhaka'". (Quoted after Sir John Woodroffe alias Arthur Avalon, "The Serpent Power".)

Anyone who might be of a non-materialistic or even spiritual kind, but who cannot be absolutely certain that he/she can fulfill these requirements, and under very extreme conditions, too, should not attempt to rouse the Kundalini because he/she will likely meet with defeat and frustration. Yet, here a question might arise in one's mind. What if a Yoga practitioner does not intend to rouse the Kundalini, but does so in the course of his/her intensive and well-meant physical and mental practices?!

Perhaps a premature rousing leading to failure and great mental trouble is not so seldom a phenomenon in the process of this Yoga? Because why should it be stated

in the *Bhagavad Gita* that a Yogi is one who "is the same in success and failure"? We usually associate a Yogi with power and knowledge, both of which we expect would protect one from failure. Yet, failure of one who is already a Yogi is clearly pointed at by the aforementioned verse of the *Bhagavad Gita*. By logical deduction, failure must often happen, else it would not have been included in the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*. So the purpose of all genuine writings about the Kundalini would then be twofold. Firstly, the writings would be helpful for those very, very exceptional persons who actually qualify as Sadhakas on this particular path. And secondly, they would help the unaware rousers of Kundalini to understand what is happening when otherwise non-understandable events start taking place in their bodies and minds.

Thus becoming aware of failure and feeling defeated by unsurmountable obstacles and forces that are immeasurably stronger than the practitioner's willpower and efforts, two things might happen. First, utter despair and depression might happen. This a Yogi or would-be-yogi is expected to bear calmly, as the *Bhagavad Gita* states when it says that "even-mindedness is Yoga". And secondly, a purification of the practitioner might be brought about by his/her humiliating recognition of his/her own weakness and apparent undeserving worthlessness. This humiliation and ensuing unhappiness reaching up to suicidal feelings have to be borne, accepted, and even thanked for as a powerful lesson and help in transforming narrowness and self-obsession into greater surrender to a force that is indescribably higher than the small, self-cherishing mind.

It is said that "success is the ability to survive failure". Thus, even a catastrophic failure to bring the arousal of the Kundalini to the desired end of "the union of Shiva and Shakti in the Sahasrara" might not be the end of the practitioner's efforts at Yoga but a stepping stone to another level of development.