



Information on Kundalini Rising/ Kundalini Awakening

Kundalini rising – the basics

What is Kundalini?

The word '*kundalini*' literally means 'the curl in the lock of hair of the beloved'. This is a metaphor for the coiled *dormant energy* at the base of the spine, the potential consciousness that exists in every person.



A more well-known representation of kundalini is in the caduceus – the symbol used today by modern medicine, with two serpents intertwined around a central staff, with wings at the top. This represents the rising of energy up two energy channels (known as *ida* and *pingala*), each making 2 ½ turns around the central column (*shushmanaa*). Yogic teachings hold that energy moves through *ida* and *pingala*, feeding the entire nervous system; however, in each of us, there is a dormant reservoir of kundalini energy below the 4th vertebra of the spine. When

this energy is awakened and rises up the central channel of the spine, it activates the pineal gland (part of the endocrine system), and leads to major shifts in consciousness. This energy then returns via *ida* and *pingala*, energising the major energy centres (chakras) of the body.

Typically, through practice of yoga as taught by Yogi Bhanan, shifts in consciousness and awakened energy occur gradually – however, some people experience more dramatic or sudden shifts, which can happen spontaneously, unrelated to spiritual practice. Some people have reported kundalini awakening experiences following meditation, yoga practice, trauma, near death experiences, meeting a teacher with awakened energy, handling spiritual objects/books. Kundalini awakening may be increasing as we shift from the Piscean to the Aquarian age, reflecting a shift in consciousness on the planet.

Sudden kundalini awakening is not the goal of yoga. In fact, Yogi Bhanan referred to these phenomena as “the glitter at the bottom of the ladder” - implying that it is not the end of the journey, and to not become over attached or fascinated with the effects. Nonetheless, if you or a family member or a yoga student is experiencing such changes, it is helpful to have some information to guide you along the way.

Kundalini rising phenomena – all varieties

Bonnie Greenwell describes seven categories of Kundalini phenomena:

1. Pranic activity or kriyas – involuntary body movements including shaking, vibrating, jerking, tingling, rushes of energy, or of sensation of heat or cold
2. Yogic phenomena – involuntary movement into yoga postures (*asanas*) or hand postures (*mudras*) – even if they are unknown to the person. This can also include hearing chanting, bells, drums. Spontaneous rituals.
3. Physiological symptoms – digestive/gastrointestinal problems, hyperactivity, nervous energy, pain in back/head/stomach, rushes of heat/cold, aggravation of old illnesses. These can spontaneously come and go.

4. Psychological and emotional upset – mood swings, waves of anxiety/guilt/depression – that may feel unrelated to one's personal life, waves of compassion/love, heightened sensitivity to others
5. Extrasensory experience – can be visual (lights, images, symbols), auditory (hearing music, mantra, voice) or olfactory (smelling incense, perfume)
6. Parapsychological experiences – psychic awareness, unusual synchronicities, healing abilities, heightened sensitivity to others, may be dramatic shifts in creative ability.
7. Samadhi or satori experiences – absorption of consciousness into state of union with all that is; sense of unity, peace, light, energy; sense of 'I am'.

Quoted from The Kundalini Guide by Dr Bonnie Greenwell. For a more detailed review of symptoms/experience relating to kundalini rising, we recommend visiting her website: www.kundaliniguide.com

Please note: if you have sudden onset changes to perception (vision, hearing) or sensation (tingling, numbness) or pain, it is important to see a doctor to rule out any neurological cause for the symptoms.

Management of kundalini – clinical, understanding, breath, mantra, etc.

- Understand this energy as **healing and re-organising** – it can work its way through your body, healing old traumas and wounds, and clearing out what no longer serves you. Having this understanding can help you to relax and allow the changes to occur, as much discomfort can come from resistance and the tension that anxiety can create.
- Trust your intuition, which is opening up and is more sensitive to what is right for you, right now.

Lifestyle

- Do things that **help you to feel grounded**:
 - take care of your feet, give yourself a foot massage (see resources section to find out how)
 - go for a walk barefoot (Yogi Bhajan recommended doing this for half an hour a day to ground)
 - eat a light diet – but include some root vegetables, which are grounding. From an Ayurvedic perspective, warm food (rather than raw, cold), is recommended
 - massage, for example, Ayurvedic abhyanga, can be beneficial to bring you into your body
- Your awakening consciousness may find that some things no longer work for you – allow yourself to **be aware of how the food you eat, the company you keep and your environments affect you**.
- **Food:** You may find that heavy foods (meat, processed foods), drugs or alcohol no longer work for you. Yogis emphasise a light vegetarian diet based on rice and vegetables, and protein from pulses and nuts (and possibly dairy).
- **Friends:** You may find that you have increased sensitivity to being around negativity or high levels of stress or people who are drinking/taking drugs. Allow yourself time to be with people around whom you feel grounded and uplifted. This is referred to in spiritual texts as “keeping the company of saints”.
- **Places:** Some environments – e.g., busy shopping malls, nightclubs, stressed work environments – may feel overwhelming. Allow yourself to gravitate towards environments that feed your spirit – including spending time in nature.

Spiritual practise

- If you have been practising meditation or yoga on your own, it is a highly recommended time to **find a teacher** – a person who you can speak with about what is happening for you, and who

- can be a grounding influence.
- In Kundalini Yoga, there is an emphasis on **practising in a group**, as this creates a group aura, which balances the qualities present in all those practising together.
- In Kundalini Yoga, the teacher and the group will **always tune in** at the beginning by chanting mantras – this creates a protected space for the class, and connects the class to the Golden Chain of masters in this tradition, to guide the practice.
- If you have been keeping a strong practice, it may be time to **take it easy**. Use your intuition (rather than your mind and 'I should') to guide your practice.
- One highly recommended practice for grounding, embodying and giving expression to the changes occurring is **chanting mantra**. Yogi Bhanjan teaches that mantra is included in all Kundalini Yoga practises in order to 'channelise the energy'. Find a mantra that you like, and sing your heart out.
- **Specific breath?**

Useful resources

Websites:

- Dr Greenwell is a nondual teacher and transpersonal psychologist in the U.S. specialising in spiritual emergence issues. She completed her doctoral research focused on the topic of kundalini rising. She has interviewed thousands of people who have experienced some form of kundalini awakening, and has had her own personal experience of this. She may be contacted through her two websites: www.kundaliniguide.com and www.awakeningguide.com.
- Yogi Bhanjan's advice on giving yourself a foot massage: <https://www.3ho.org/3ho-lifestyle/health-and-healing/foot-massage>

Books:

The Kundalini Guide: a companion for the inward journey – Dr Bonnie Greenwell, av at amazon.co.uk

Quotes from Yogi Bhanjan

“What is kundalini? The energy of the glandular system combines with the nervous system to become more sensitive so that the totality of the brain perceives signals and interprets them, to that the effect of the sequence of the cause becomes very clear to the man. In other words, man becomes totally, wholesomely aware. That is why call it the yoga of awareness. And as the rivers end up in the same ocean, all yoga ends up by raising the kundalini in the person. What is the kundalini? The creative potential of the human.”

In response to the question 'Is Kundalini dangerous?':

“Is money dangerous? It is just an energy. Kundalini is a latent energy that can be used for total consciousness. The only dangerous thing is the person whose kundalini is raised properly. That person is totally conscious. He cannot be lied to or cheated or politically swayed. The kundalini is essential. As long as you practice a total discipline or a complete and balanced kriya, there is no difficulty. In Kundalini Yoga, you will notice that every meditation and kriya has some form of mantra in it. This ensures the channelisation of the energy.”